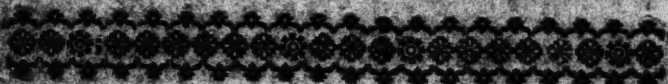


Free Grace indeed!

SET FORTH

In a SCRIPTURAL VIEW, &c.



W. H. & C. O. S. 1841

LETTER

W. H. & C. O. S. 1841



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Free Grace indeed!

SET FORTH
In a SCRIPTURAL VIEW
OF THE
PRINCIPLE of GRACE
Wrought in the HEART by the SPIRIT
AND IN
A REPLY to the REFLECTIONS on an
EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE between
S. P. and R. S.

By *SAMUEL PIKE.*

*1 Pet. v. 12. Exhorting and testifying, that this is
the true Grace of God, wherewith ye stand.*

LONDON:

Printed for J. BUCKLAND at the Buck, in Paternoster-
Row; T. FIELD at the Wheat Sheaf, Cheap-side;
and E. DILLY at the Rose and Crown, in the
Poultry. 1760

{Price One Shilling.}

Free Grace indeed!

SET FORTH

IN A DESCRIPTIVE VIEW

OF THE

PRINCIPLES OF GRACE

Wrought in the HEART by the SPIRIT

AND IN

A REPLY to the REFLECTIONS on an
EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE between

S. P. and M.



By S. P. and M.

Printed by J. Baskin and J. Baskin, from this is
the true Grace of God, even as it is.

LONDON

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and E. Baskin of the Rev. and Grace in the

Year 1770

(Price One Shilling)

THE
P R E F A C E.

A NOTE of admiration is affixed to the general title, in order to express in the fewest words and in the clearest language, the central design of this performance. When the mind of a sinner is enlightened into the true meaning of the gospel, and his conscience is struck with the importance, evidence and freeness of the grace and salvation proclaimed therein; he is at once surprised by it, and cries out from his very heart, Free grace indeed! Wherein he has not his eye fixed, or his thoughts reflecting upon any grace wrought in him; but his attention is drawn entirely to the free and perfect grace revealed in the gospel, thro' Jesus Christ to sinners of mankind. By the impression this makes upon his heart, true faith, hope, love and joy are produced, attended with an admiration of that perfect love which shines forth in the atonement Christ has made for sin. By this revelation of God's love, the sinner is surprized; it comes to him quite unexpected; and makes him cry out, "Can there be such grace as this, in a God of spotless holiness and perfect justice; to proclaim help and salvation freely to the worst of sinners! Surely then, I may hope and rejoice, notwithstanding I find nothing in or about myself, but what would condemn and destroy me: I am therefore under the strongest obligations to love and obey; since where sin abounded, there grace does much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, so grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

The grace or love that thus appears to the mind and conscience, from the blessed gospel by the blessed spirit, is truly divine or worthy of God: quite distinct from all counterfeits; as it is pure and perfect, full and free, neither admitting any condition, nor needing any addition. All counterfeit grace is either conditional, so that a person must do something to initiate himself to it; or distant, so that a person must make some advances towards it, or perceive something in himself previous to his enjoying the benefit and comfort of it: Whereas the true grace of God as revealed openly in the word of the gospel is both absolute and immediate.

'Tis absolute, requiring nothing for the helpless sinner to do or endeavour towards obtaining an interest in the divine favour: for Paul says, if it be by grace, it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. Rom. ii. 6. And it is immediate, affording relief previous to the exertion of any act of ours: for the apostle directly subjoins, but if it be of works it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work. Nay, unless the grace manifested in the gospel by Jesus Christ has both these properties, it cannot be free indeed. For how should that be quite free, which leaves the poor sinner any thing to do to obtain it; or does not hold forth to him such information as is sufficient to afford him immediate hope of salvation by Christ. Upon the whole then, I cannot but apprehend that revealed grace has these properties: so that a person no sooner understands and believes it, but he is enlightened and relieved thereby; and it becomes a principle of all holiness and consolation to him; being taught of God, by the spirit of truth and grace.

The attentive reader will easily perceive, that the aim of this performance centers here; and that what is said concerning every other subject, whether regeneration, faith, experience or obedience, &c. is in order to clear and vindicate his important view of divine grace; and to show how all the doctrines of grace are consistent with it, are explained by it, are drawn from it and center in it.

The importance and excellency of this divine grace, shining into my mind with more clearness of late, than heretofore, is the only ground of all the variation that appears in my sentiments and expressions. My stating and
preaching

preaching the gospel in this light, is the occasion of all the dissatisfaction that is discovered towards my ministry; and is the only reason, so far as I know, why my name is cast out as evil.—But I must nevertheless, preach and proclaim this freeness of grace to fellow sinners, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: Firmly persuaded, that this is the true grace of God; and the only sort of grace that can suit their condition, and that can upon a right principle or foundation, either relieve their consciences, purify their hearts, comfort their souls, or direct their conduct; under the influence of the blessed spirit. Yea, and I must look upon the welcome reception of this grace, together with the holy fruits thereof, to be the true and proper proof of genuine christianity in heart and life.

If you would know more distinctly, what are the special ends aim'd at in these sheets, you may take them under the following particulars.

1. To vindicate this view of the true grace of God, from those various and odious reflections that are most unjustly cast upon it.
2. To detect a peculiar species of self-dependence, which may be cherished even under a profession of the strictest orthodoxy.
3. To show what is the true nature of the work of grace wrought in the heart by the divine spirit; or what is the proper root, spring or principle of all gospel-experience and obedience, according to the divine word.
4. To set open the way of peace and hope, thro' the blood of Christ freely presented in the gospel, for the proper and immediate relief of the self condemn'd, the perplexed and intangled.
5. To give a general clue how to judge of the truth of our faith; and so of our hope, love, comfort and obedience flowing from it.
6. To set forth the manner in which a person comes to a solid, firm satisfaction, about the safety of his state God-ward.
7. To state the difference between that experience and obedience, which flows from the sense and influence of the true grace of God; and that which arises from some counterfeit thereof.

P R E F A C E

All this is here attempted, first, by presenting to the public, the substance of two letters written to a friend, which chiefly regards the principle of grace in the heart. These letters are so varied in several instances from what they were, as originally written, that they ought to be considered by the reader in no other light, than as a familiar method of stating the subjects therein handled.

Then follows a reply to the reflections on an epistolary correspondence, &c. concluding with an appendix.

If what is here written should prove, by the efficacy of the divine spirit, a happy means of striking conviction into the consciences of some; of setting at liberty the enslaved souls of others; of confirming some in the most holy faith, once delivered to the saints; and of promoting true comfort and true holiness in the hearts of any: 'Twill be a great pleasure to me, and a great mercy to them; what ever opposition it may meet with from any quarter.

The Reader is desired to correct the following errors.

PAGE 1. l. 7. read *my* for *the*. l. 8. r. *the* for *my*.
 p. 6. begin line 1. thus, *To the former letter*. p.
 15. l. 11. r. *it* for *is*. p. 18. l. 11. r. *Jesus* for *Je*.
 p. 30. l. 2. r. *favour* for *saviour*. p. 47. l. 16. r. *whom*
 for *uba*. p. 51. l. 10. r. *uncertain* for *certain*.

O N T H E



ON THE

PRINCIPLE

GRACE

In the HEART.

SINCE 'tis much desired by many, that I should publickly give a fair account of my present sentiments, that they may see wherein they are distinct from those I have formerly profest; and since many wild and extravagant notions have gone abroad concerning them, I therefore think it my duty to answer their desire as distinctly as I can, leaving the event, as to the own reputation and interest, in the hands of my blessed Jesus who is head over all things to the Church.

It cannot be supposed, that I should here lay forth any thing different from what I continually preach in public, or have occasionally written to private friends. I can therefore think of no easier or better way of stating my sentiments, than by laying before the public some letters written privately; only suppressing every thing that is merely personal, leaving out what appears needless or foreign to my present design; making a few variations or additions as may seem needful; and at the close to annex a distinct reply to the reflections already printed on an epistolary correspondence, &c.

This being done, every one will have an opportunity to review or peruse the whole with deliberation, which otherwise he could not do.

B

As

2 *On the principle of grace in the heart.*

As the whole will appear to terminate in a scriptural description of the principle of Grace, and the nature of the Spirit's work and what relates thereto, I have therefore prefix'd a title accordingly.

DEAR SIR,

SINCE I receiv'd your unexpected letter, my thoughts have been led upon various accounts diligently to enquire wherein the radical difference between us lies. As for those charges frequently alledged against the Doctrine I preach, that it is Antinomian, derogates from the work of the spirit, destroys the comfort of believers, and sets aside the use of exhortations both to believers and unbelievers, &c. These are particulars too BAD to be easily credited by those who know my general character and principles: And when such things as these are objected to me, I feel or am intimately conscious that the sentiments I espouse are not in the least degree chargeable with any such consequences. And every one that rightly understands them will presently perceive, that they cannot be *Antinomian*, because the truth appears to be of such a nature, that a person who believes can have no enjoyment of himself, but in loving and obeying it from the heart according to the precepts of the gospel. They cannot be said to derogate from the spirit's work, because 'tis all along aver'd that the gospel can take no saving effect but by the necessary, efficacious Almighty and sovereign agency of the divine spirit. Neither do they destroy the comforts of a believer, because they continually present to him a compleat and free Saviour, for his immediate relief, and assert that the spirit of God witnesses to the genuine effects of the gospel appearing in his experience and conduct. They do not set aside the use of exhortations; for exhortations to all sorts of persons are allow'd and given upon evangelical principles. Neither can they be justly charged with enthusiasm, because they continually lead the mind to and fix it upon the divine testimony and record, making that the reason of hope and motive to duty.

There is no one of the doctrinal points usually call'd Calvinism, as opposed either to Socinianism, Arminianism,

anism or Antinomianism wherein we disagree, so far as I can discern. Since then I can clearly and conscientiously aver thus much, it must be at first sight surprising and unaccountable, that such a set of odious charges should be drawn up and propagated against the doctrines I profess and preach.

Will you then give me liberty to conjecture what the difference might be. I apprehend it must lie hereabout: in the *very nature* of the principle of inherent grace. It is, I know, apprehended and represented that I deny inherent grace, or an implanted principle of grace; which indeed I do not: But I imagine we may mean different things by these words or phrases. You mean by it, some inherent principle, separate from and previous to the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

But in my view, the proper principle of grace upon which the believer acts, by which he is quicken'd, comforted, &c. is the *implanted word*, the truth in the heart, the gospel in the conscience; the knowledge of Jesus Christ giv'n to the soul by the spirit, thro' the word of God: by all which phrases, I intend for substance one and the same thing.

So that the believer is animated and comforted &c. merely by what he knows and believes concerning himself as a helpless sinner in himself considered, and concerning Jesus Christ as a most free and perfect saviour revealed.

This is the seed, the incorruptible seed that abideth in him, and is in the properest sense the principle or spring of all he is as a christian; and this is indeed, the *only discernable* principle, by which he is led to live continually upon something without, not taking his encouragement or hope from any thing within himself, but from the consideration of what he sees in Christ and the gospel of free grace. This grace of God reveal'd in the word being open, free and perfect, when apprehended in it's necessity and importance by the spirit of truth and grace, works upon the heart, to influence all the powers of the soul; and as it proceeds to influence the mind and conduct, it does so far bring it's own evidence along with it, and does so far prove a persons own special interest in the redemption of Jesus Christ: Whereas you seem to apprehend, that this re-

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vealed grace understood and believed, is not sufficient for sanctification and satisfaction, without the consideration of some previous implanted principle; whereby it comes to pass that you are obliged to take into your thought something wrought in you, to give you a reason of hope and ground of comfort. I know you are ready to profess in the clearest and strongest manner, that you have no degree of dependance upon any thing besides the work of Christ for your justification and acceptance before God. But then do you dare to depend directly upon Christ's work alone, without the consideration of something wrought in you, as a kind of a *medium* to encourage you to trust in Christ? If not; 'tis easy to see where the dependance is *properly* or *immediately* placed.

Suppose every thought of an inherent principle as previous to, or aside from the knowledge of Christ was to be taken away or cast aside, where then is your hope and confidence? Then the free grace gospel appears defective and insufficient in your esteem, to furnish you with an immediate ground of hope, and with effectual motives to love and obedience. But what is the reason that it should appear thus defective? The Neonomians place their own duties, endeavours, or the exercises of their own faith and repentance between Christ and themselves; and you seem to place this principle in the same middle way, and this renders the pure gospel so far insipid and insufficient. But could you once conceive that you are not possess'd of any previous principle, and that you neither have nor can obtain any such principle; but on the contrary were destitute of every thing to give you the least hope, but what comes to the mind thro' the knowledge of Christ, you would then see your everlasting all absolutely and immediately depending upon what you know of the design and perfection of Christ's work. Then you would find the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ not defective but sufficient, for a most attractive encouragement and for working powerfully upon the mind &c. In a word, the

* I mean such as conceive the gospel to be a sort of new law, of milder terms.

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the question between us seems to be this. Whether the pure knowledge of Jesus Christ as an absolutely necessary, free and perfect savior given to the soul by the spirit be properly the principle of grace, or whether we must not take in some consideration of something wrought in us abstracted from this, in order to render the knowledge of Christ sufficient and effectual for comfort and holiness. If I have stated the question right, I can easily see, how the want of this something induces you to think that my doctrine is enthusiastical, antinomian, and destructive to the comfort of believers &c. For I guess, that you are ready to account it *enthusiastical* to rejoice in Jesus Christ alone, without a consciousness of and a reflection upon some inward work, distinct from the true knowledge of Jesus Christ; that you esteem it *antinomian*, because you imagine something more to be necessary for preserving us from sin and quick'ning us to duty, than the influence of the gospel upon the heart, and that you judge it *destructive* to the comforts of believers, because you can perceive no solid comfort contain'd in resting upon Christ alone, without a previous consciousness of something else to support and enliven the hope.

But then you will easily see, that as the want of this something besides the knowledge of Christ for a principle of grace, induces you to apprehend such sad consequences from my sentiments; it is evident, that so far you are for laying the stress of your hope and comfort upon that which stands distinguished from Christ known and believed. Thus, dear sir, I have done what I can, without much argument, to state wherein I guess the difference lies at the bottom. I may be mistaken in my representation, and should be glad, if you would correct or confirm it in a few lines by way of reply. The long intimacy I have had with, and the strong affection I have had and still have for you, fill me with an affectionate concern, and excite my earnest supplications, that if it were the will of God, we may both be led to see eye to eye in God's true light. But in these grieving circumstances, the blessed truth I preach is my pillar and support, knowing in whom I have believed. I rest yours, &c.

L E T T E R II.

To this letter I have received a reply, the substance of which, so far as it regards the sentiments exhibited therein and the evidence produced for them, is fairly transcribed or represented in the following answer.

S I R,

YOU express yourself as under no small amazement, that we should not be able to understand each other's meaning in our several mutual conversations of late. — Whatever be the cause, which I am not accountable for, yet I find it to be a real fact. — For you have in the most surprizing manner, misunderstood me in various instances; altho' I took all possible pains to open my mind in the most distinct language I could, without affixing any new ideas to my usual phraseology.

Indeed, I must here confess, that by discerning the simplicity of the gospel in a clearer light than formerly, I receive clearer, more consistent, spiritual and evangelical ideas to many scriptural words and phrases: The beauty and propriety of which cannot be discerned, unless it pleases God by his holy spirit through the gospel to strike a divine light into the understanding and conscience; a light which discovers the perfect helplessness of the sinner, and the perfection of Christ's work, clear of those mixtures and embarrassments, with which we are naturally prone to be perplexed and deluded.

But it is beyond measure astonishing, that you should impute such a number of sentiments to me, which are utterly contrary to the truth of my meaning.

As (1st.) You say, that I render *useless all inward experiences, as evidential of a personal interest.* A sentiment I never embraced nor suggested. On the contrary, I always asserted and maintained, that inward experiences, followed by corresponding gospel conduct, are the only things that can evidence a personal interest

in

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in Christ; and that so far as these appear to be genuine and no farther, we have ground to conclude it concerning ourselves.

(2) You say, I have been *for reducing believers to the general hope of the Gospel*. If by *reducing* them to it, you mean, that we are never to forget this general free hope, but are to make use of it upon all occasions; this is indeed a real truth: But if by *reducing* them hereto, you mean a *confining* them to it, so that they can never obtain any further hope than this concerning their own personal interest, 'tis a great mistake and a perversion of my meaning.

Again (3) You charge me with maintaining that the *primitive christians rejoiced not in any consciousness of their personal interest, but merely in the truth of the gospel*. This is another strange construction upon my meaning; unless you interpose the words *at first* into the sentence; and then it stands forth as a clear truth: For the primitive christians did at first rejoice merely in the truth of the gospel of free grace: 'Twas this which gave them their first hope and joy, and was the first spring of their love and obedience.

Again (4) You are free to say, I strenuously maintain'd, that the *bare truth believed, without any consciousness of interest in the good things revealed in the gospel, was sufficient*. On the contrary, I maintain, that the bare truth believed, upon account of the immediate freeness of divine grace revealed therein, produces an experimental consciousness of interest, so far as it has its proper influence upon the heart.

(5) You intimate, that 'tis my opinion, a *persuasion of personal interest leads to spiritual pride, promotes a Pharisaical temper, and is one principle source of the declension of religion amongst us*. Whereas 'tis very evident, I always asserted that a persuasion of interest arising out of faith and its effects, is very comfortable and useful: While on the contrary, it must be allowed, that a carnal confidence founded upon past experiences, is one principal source of the declension of religion.—But what still more amazes me, is—

(6) That you should think, *I am for annihilating all real distinction of characters between believers and unbelievers*.

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believers before God. (The article of justification is here utterly excluded in both our sentiments.) This is as opposite to my sentiments as can possibly be; for it is freely granted and openly preach'd by me, that whatsoever there be in the believers heart, language or conduct which flows from the true knowledge and love of Christ is acceptable to God thro' him.

In the middle of your letter, you resume this charge, by mentioning an axiom of Mr. S——'s, which you say I have adopted; that, "No character *whatsoever* is acceptable or pleasing in the sight of God, *besides* that of Jesus Christ;" or that, "There is no difference in the characters of men before God;" whereupon you proceed to infer that these sentiments portend an inundation of the worst kind of *Antinomianism*, and tend to destroy the difference between moral good and evil.—But please to stop a moment here, and you will presently see that all these frightful consequences are invalid.—Who did ever annihilate all real distinction of characters before God, excepting in the matter of our justification? Neither this author nor myself: On the contrary, it will appear to every one who reads his book with open eyes, or hears my preaching with open ears, that we allow with the utmost freedom, that all good works flowing from the faith and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, are well pleasing in the sight of God, and will meet with a gracious reward: while on the other hand, 'tis constantly asserted, that if a person does not bring forth the proper fruits of faith, he is a stranger to the grace of Christ and is none of his.

But I am almost tired with this part of the controversy; because it looks more like a concern to vindicate my own character, than to state the truth as it is in Jesus; yet I must add here, that every one who has a regard for his reputation and usefulness as a minister, cannot but be grieved to find such a set of unjust charges drawn up against him, and handed about to prejudice the minds of people against him and his ministrations.

However it is some satisfaction to me, to find you acknowledge, "That after our friendly debates on this point had lasted three or four months, I declared myself intirely agreed with you upon it, tho' it has

"fre—

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" frequently appeared to you since, by my public discourses, that I had not been consistent with that declaration." For this acknowledgement of your convictions me, that you have not drawn up these charges with any malicious design, but that they are pure misapprehensions. At the same time, this concession of yours gives ground for any *impartial* person, at least to suspend his belief of these allegations. And it may easily be made to appear, that all these misapprehensions of yours about my principles, arise from your not discerning, so clearly as I could wish, the nature of that immediate freeness of revealed grace which I contend for.

I now proceed to consider the points which seem to be in reality in dispute between us.—You very ingenuously confess a change in your sentiments concerning the nature of justifying faith, in the following words,—
" Another point on which we have differ'd, is respecting the very nature of justifying faith.—And here I frankly acknowledge, I was once a disciple of Mr. S——n's, and really thought his sentiments scriptural; and read my new testament with some assiduity and a strong prepossession of mind to find it there. But, contrary to my expectation, was compelled by the most explicit evidence to give it up.—
" This sir, I think is the only instance of fickleness I am able to charge upon myself, with respect to Mr. S——n's writings, that is, I do not now disapprove of any of his doctrinal sentiments I have heretofore approv'd of, *as I then understood them.*—As you have here produced no evidences, or arguments, or have given no explicit reason for the change in your sentiments, I can only reply: that I have likewise since read over my new testament, and that with a *jealous* eye upon the author's leading principle; the consequence of which is, that I am more abundantly confirmed in it thereby. And one thing which more especially fixes and ascertains the truth in this light, is the observation that I could not but make on the various conversions recorded in the acts of the apostles, and frequently referred to in the epistles: where no remark is more obvious than this; that the first converts only heard, understood and believed

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believed the apostolical testimony concerning Jesus Christ, and were immediately converted and comforted thereby. — I find no account of any acts of faith which they endeavoured to exert, previous to their receiving hope, peace and satisfaction from what they heard, and believed. And since these primitive conversions are set before us as an authentic standard, the affair must stand in the same light now; unless you will suppose, that unconverted persons educated in a christian nation, have better hearts before their effectual calling by the gospel, than the Jews and Heathens had then. In what sense I understand the phrase, *the bare belief of the bare report*, (tho' for my part I am not fond of using it) may easily be seen in the *Epistolary Correspondence*, letter 5. which account of the nature of faith you was once (before it was printed) highly pleased with, as many others still are; because they find all their hope, love and holiness, coming to them from Christ, by that view of gospel faith. And lest this view of it should be misadvised, I have preached expressly upon it, to show how this faith stands distinguished from a mere human faith, a meer historical faith and a diabolical faith; as likewise how it stands opposed to an Antinomian and Neonomian faith.

The other point in difference between us relates to the nature of a *principle of grace in the heart*: which indeed occupies the greatest part both of my letter to you and of your reply to me. Upon this subject you express yourself thus. "You nearly represent my sentiments on the doctrine of regeneration. I am of the opinion, that the holy spirit, when he regenerates a dead sinner, implants an *inherent spiritual principle of grace in the soul*, separate from, and previous to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the word: previous in the order of nature in an adult person, and in order both of time and nature in infants: and I think the sacred writings support me in this sentiment."

Hence then I have little more to do than to examine into the genuine meaning of the passages or texts which you quote in favour of a principle of grace as previous to and separate from the true knowledge of Jesus Christ.

As

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11

As to the arguments you draw from Christ's conversation with *Nicodemus* in the 3d chapter of *John*, I would observe, that as the corrupt bias in our nature, called *flesh*, verse 6, proceeds from and is founded upon the lie or falsehood originally instilled into human nature by the father of lies, which is propagated in natural generation, we know not how: so the new principle called *spirit*, opposing this, must be the *truth* in the heart and conscience: And as all the operations and effects of the corrupt principle, appear to arise from worldly mindedness and self righteousness; so the new principle of grace is the implantation and efficacy of that truth, which stands in direct opposition to both these corrupt principles. And here it is very remarkable, that when you are striving to express yourself in the clearest, strongest and most definitive language concerning the *indwelling* of the principle of grace in the heart, in order to prove that it must be somewhat distinct from the *truth* implanted there; every one of the expressions you use, is in their fullest latitude equally true of the implanted or ingrafted word, which I would here transcribe, applying the whole to my view of the subject.

" This implanted word is an inherent inward principle convey'd to and implanted by the holy spirit
" in regeneration, which powerfully and prevailingly
" inclines and biases us to all that is holy and good :
" And as the corruption of nature is intimately in and
" with the soul, prior to any of its effects, so in the
" nature of the thing, this principle of grace (the gospel in the conscience) must be in the soul in order
" of nature previous to any of its effects; 'tis a *divine*
" *instinct*, and is a remaining abiding principle in the
" soul, as the corruption of our nature is, whether it
" be always producing any sensible effects or not ;
" even as the principle of reason in man is an abiding
" principle, tho' he be not always reasoning on moral or revealed truth." For in truth, the gospel believed is the *reason* of the true christian.

You aim to overthrow this view of the inherent principle, by objecting to me the case of *Infants*:— To which I would briefly answer.

1. That

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1. That if we reflect how entirely passive even an adult person is in receiving the gospel truth, it must be said, that even such a one receives the kingdom of God as little children or babes.

2. 'Tis as easy to conceive how a truth (tho' not explicitly) may be implanted in the soul of an infant by the efficacy of the divine spirit, as to conceive in any sense, how a *falsehood* may be there; so that we are justly said to go astray from the womb, telling lies. But not to insist upon these two particulars, what I would have more especially observed here is—

3. That since the scripture is very silent as to infants, it is evident, that our abstruse metaphysical and abstracted reasonings on this head, with which many have delighted to amuse themselves, should not be improved to set aside the declared ordinary method of God's operating on the mind of man, which is, *that faith cometh by hearing.*——And,

4. When our lord avers in his continued discourse with *Nicodemus* John iii, 18. that he that believeth not is condemned already; no one can think, that this in the strictest and fullest sense is designed to extend to infants. And yet this sentiment is introduced by our Lord, in that same discourse in which he converses about regeneration. And what if it should appear, that our Lord's discourse concerning faith is intended to explain his meaning about regeneration? Then it would be most evident, that all your arguments drawn from this chapter, to prove such a distinct previous principle, must fall to the ground.——And, indeed sir, there is the greatest reason to think thus: For Christ in speaking on these subjects, is plainly showing one and the same thing; namely, how a person first enters into spiritual life. *Nicodemus* being confused in his thoughts, asks verse 9. *How can these things be?* Whereupon Christ reproves him for his ignorance, verse 10. and then proceeds to explain *how these things could be.* And in my opinion, this is what many professors of the present day want to have explained to them; for they cannot see how the faith of the gospel is sufficient in the hands of the blessed spirit to renew and sanctify the soul.—But whoever clearly understands what follows in our Lord's

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Lord's discourse, may easily discern, what a fullness, beauty, suitableness and excellency there is in the knowledge of Jesus Christ to answer all these spiritual purposes.

The next passage you adduce, is *Gal. v. 22, 23.* where it is said, that *the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.* From whence you would infer, that *faith* is a fruit or effect of a previous inherent principle; here called the *spirit*. But it is not so very evident that the *person* of the spirit is not here intended. However, it is much more agreeable to the obvious meaning of this text, to think that the word *faith* here, does not signify *justifying* faith, but that it here intends *fidelity*, as this word is translated in *Titus ii. 10.* because it is evidently ranked with long suffering, gentleness, goodness and meekness, which are social virtues. As for *Eph. i. 19, 20.* which you strongly urge to prove a sort of physical, or (what shall I call it) mechanical power, exerted in regeneration, because the apostle compares and contrasts the power towards them that believe, with the power that raised up Jesus from the dead: 'Tis no great difficulty to reply, that power or efficacy must always be of such a nature as is suited to the object upon which it is exerted. Now, tho' the power which raised Christ's body from the grave, may be called a physical or mechanical power, it does not follow from hence, that the power which works towards them that believe must be of the same kind. Nay, the context tells us that it is not; for if you look into verse 17. you will there find the very nature of this energy expressed; — That the father of glory may give you the *spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.*

However, these two kinds of efficacy may very well be contrasted in the present comparison made by the apostle: For in both cases, nothing short of an *Almighty* energy is exerted by the divine spirit. — Yea, it is very remarkable, that when the apostle draws this comparison, he does it expressly in such a manner as to fix our thoughts upon the *exceeding greatness* of the power; C plainly

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plainly intimating, that it is in *this* respect he would have us conceive the comparison to hold just and true.

You next introduce four or five texts, or rather phrases of scripture, in support of this previous distinct inherent principle; and then say. —

“ While I understand and intend by all this, an *im-
“ planted principle of grace in the soul*, you seem to
“ mean no more, than the objective grace of God
“ revealed in the word, brought home to the mind
“ and conscience by the holy spirit, with the present
“ effects that follow thereupon in the soul.” And
whether any thing more, or any thing different be in-
tended by these phrases, will easily be seen by the fol-
lowing brief remarks upon each. — 1 *Pet.* 1. 23. 24.
where we read of an *incorruptible seed that liveth and abideth
for ever, whereby we are begotten*. But can any one
conceive, that the seed here meant, is any thing dis-
tinct from the word of grace in the heart. No, no,
for it is here expressly said, that this seed is the *word
of God*. — And lest this should be mistaken for the per-
sonal word of God, (which one would think could ne-
ver be thought of, that Christ personally considered
should be the seed *in us*) I say, lest this should possibly
enter into the mind of any man, it is directly added,
and *this is the word* (in the greek) *the saying which is
declared as good news to you*. —

1 *John* ii. 20, where is mentioned, that believers
have an unction, or anointing, and they know all things;
that this does not mean any thing distinct from the
truth abiding in us, by the operation of the spirit, will
be extremely evident to one who reads attentively the
following verses, 21, 24, 26, where the apostle ex-
plains this to be his meaning.

John 4. 14. There we read of a *well of water in us* :
But can any one imagine that this well of water intends
any thing previous to the knowledge of Christ; when
he reflects that Christ said before in verse 10. *if thou
knewest the gift of God, thou wouldest have asked him, and
he would have given thee living water*.

In *Eph.* ii. 10. it is said, that we are his workman-
ship, *created in Christ Jesus*. This is brought in by
the apostle to prove that we are saved by *grace through
faith*;

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faith; and since we are in Christ, and Christ in us actually only by *faith*, nothing is more evident than that this spiritual creation includes and supposes believing in it.—And let it not be thought strange, that the work of the spirit by the gospel upon the heart through *faith*, should be called a *creation*. For tho' it creates no new powers in our souls; yet it creates new hopes, fears, desires, &c. as every one that has known and felt the power of the truth in his heart distinctly, can easily perceive. And indeed, so far as the gospel takes effect by the spirit, it appears that, *if any man be in Christ* (which is by *faith*) *he is a new creature; old things are past away, and all things become new.*

The last text is what you mention and comment upon, in the following remarkable words. “In a word, the apostle *Peter* describes the difference between us in this point, 1 *Pet. ii. 2*, where he exhorts believers as new born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. You call the *word of truth*, together with its effects in experience, the *principle of grace*; while I, with the apostle, choose to call it the *food* of the new born or regenerate soul, whereby it grows up to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus.”—You seem here to be very sanguine indeed, that you have the apostle on your side: But nothing is more apparent, than that your method of argument is founded upon a most palpable mistake, and a most surprising oversight. For the context, immediately preceeding, determines that the divine word of the gospel is the seed of the new birth, as well as the food of the new born soul. And the apostle's reasoning runs in a quite opposite channel to yours. For while you infer, that because it is the *food*, therefore it cannot be *seed*, the apostle argues thus; because the word of grace in the gospel is the *seed* by which you are spiritually begotten; therefore you ought to desire that same word for the nourishment of your new born souls.

And if this text which you are so positive decides the point in your favour, determines on the contrary side so expressly; this affords a strong presumption, that other texts which you think may be produced, will,

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upon fair examination, appear to speak and determine on that side of the question which you discard.

I might now set about to mention and comment upon a great number of texts which speak expressly in favour of this point, that the divine word in the heart is the principle of grace: but you have almost saved me this trouble; since it appears so very evident, that the greatest part of the passages you bring, prove directly the contrary to what you bring them for.

But I must here add, that it grieves me to the heart, to find a friend, a christian so much at a loss about the very root of all christian experience, as not to be able to see with what propriety the ingrafted word can be called an *abiding principle*: for you proceed to represent its effects as only occasional and transient. — But, however transient some particular effects of the word in christian experience may be, yet it is evident, that the word itself *abides* in every believer, and *worketh effectually* in them that believe: 1 *Thess. ii. 13.*

You are pleased, a little farther on in your letter, to stile the following a new doctrine, “That the simple truth believed or received into the heart and conscience, is all sufficient for consolation and sanctification.” Strange indeed! that this should be a novel sentiment: Whereas, if there be any truth in the bible more strongly insisted upon, more directly asserted and proved, or more frequently inculcated than others; this is one of them: Is not the whole 19th Psalm and almost the whole 119th written on purpose to prove, that the divine testimony believed, is all-sufficient for these spiritual purposes? Do not the apostles conspire in saying, *that the gospel is the power of God to the salvation of every one that believeth; that it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching a crucified Christ, to save them that believe; that the scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation; that the ingrafted word is able to save our souls: &c.* So that however this sentiment may be traduced, or what ever be said to be the lives of those that profess it, ’tis no new doctrine, nor matter of doubtful speculation, but a most necessary and important truth: Neither can I account for its being esteemed *novel*, but by fearing

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lest those who esteem it such, have some way or other a very erroneous or defective view of the gospel itself. While all along it is and must be freely granted and allow'd as a very important point of Christian doctrine likewise; that the agency of the divine spirit is absolutely necessary to give a soul a right understanding and belief of the gospel for its consolation and sanctification. In a word, all the passages of scripture which speak of the suitableness, sufficiency and excellency of the word of grace; for quickning consolation, purification &c. And all those texts which represent faith as what our divines chuse to call the *mother grace* or the spring of all the rest; all these I say conspire with one voice to confirm and establish this sentiment; and so to prove that the word of grace in the heart and conscience is most properly the principle of grace.

As you have here thought fit to introduce a reflection upon the lives of those who are call'd the patrons of this new doctrine; it might be proper to reply, that this consideration has very little weight with it in its own nature; altho' you seem to lay a very considerable stress upon it. However, in answer to your charge, I can say this much. I am well assured that those independent Churches in *Scotland* refer'd to, would censure and even excommunicate a person who should appear to take an habitual delight in the fashionable pleasures of the age, and who should dare to live without prayer in his family: Yea 'tis both just and necessary to add, that these Churches do actually pay a *more than common* attention and regard to the laws of Christ, and the precepts of Christianity, in opposition to all worldly-mindedness and all immorality; maintaining the closest brotherly love and mutual watchfulness for the truth's sake.

You have in your letter, more than once, intimated that some important truth was now denied or conceal'd. But this is far from being the case; for the cardinal truth of the gospel, Jesus Christ, the only and immediate foundation of hope, is held forth with greater clearness; and every other gospel truth that has ever been profess'd amongst us, is preached and explained in clear connexion and full consistency herewith.

I have now nothing more to do for the finishing my
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reply

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reply, than to give you some friendly faithfull hints upon those parts of your letter, wherein you appear to make a very good, clear, strong profession of your reliance upon Jesus Christ alone, in the following manner; " When I have the most undoubted satisfaction and " fullest assurance of this principle of grace *in my own soul*, " by its experimental and indubitable effects; or when " I loose all sight of it; the ground of my hope and " confidence is still the same before an infinitely holy " and just God, and is founded *only* on that perfect " and everlasting righteousness, which the blessed Je- " has wrought out for the justification of ungodly sin- " ners *as such*, and *which* is reveal'd in the gospel, in " so *free, gracious and indefinite* a manner, as to en- " courage and warrant every guilty sinner, as well as " myself, to believe, trust and confide for everlasting " salvation. And however various or multiform the " cases and circumstances of guilty sinners may be in " their own apprehension or before God, this glorious " this free and blessed hope of the gospel bears the " same even and equal aspect to them all.

" Again, when this principle is utterly out of sight, I " can draw nigh to God with an humble and fiducial " confidence; eyeing the everlasting righteousness and " compleat atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the " *sole* ground of my hope. And when I have the full- " est view of this principle, as in me, by the experi- " mental and blessed effects it produces, it adds no- " thing to the ground of my hope; but is only *eviden- " tial* of my personal interest *in* and vital union *with* " the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Lord *my* righteousness, " hope and strength.

This is for the most part a very good evangelical profession; and it is this that gives me a pleasing hope concerning you, notwithstanding what has past between us. But I must annex the following easy and faithfull remarks upon it.

1 If you can draw nigh to God with a humble and fiducial confidence, eyeing the everlasting righteousness and compleat atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ as the *sole* ground of your hope; *even when this principle is utterly out of your sight*; then what occasion
for

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for laying so great stress upon the doctrine and consciousness of a distinct previous principle: Since a view of the compleat work of Christ is own'd sufficient to support this humble confidence, when every other encouragement is out of sight.

This is such a clear concession and acknowledgment, that one of your own friends upon reading it presently discerned, that this was giving up the *importance* of all you had been contending for.

2. If the view of the divine righteousness revealed in the gospel is sufficient and made effectual by the spirit, to support the hope, and so to inflame the love; and so to produce experimental and indubitable effects; what occasion for any thing else in experience and practice, to prove a special interest in Christ, besides the hope, love and obedience &c. flowing from such a view of Christ and his grace. And here I must beg leave to add, whether you will grant it or no, that I am fully persuaded that neither you nor I, nor any other professor of christianity, have any true hope, comfort, holiness or evidences of interest, but what flow from and are maintained by this view of the work of Jesus Christ: However,

3. I believe you yourself will readily allow, that a person may begin and proceed in his path to heaven safely, comfortably and holily, by the knowledge of Jesus Christ and him crucified, as a free and perfect saviour; without so much as thinking about any other principle of grace, as previous to or distinct from the knowledge of Jesus Christ; finding his comfort, strength &c. flowing into his soul thro' that knowledge; and if so, what you are pleading so earnestly for, cannot possibly be esteemed a point of any great importance.

4. I apprehend, that throughout your profession, you keep in your mind too great a distinction or difference, between the revealed righteousness believed, and the principle of grace in the heart. Whereas the truth is this, so far as gospel *Experience* or *Practice* is concern'd in the matter; that the atonement and righteousness of Christ revealed in the word and believed by the soul, is the proper principle of grace: By which I mean, that the knowledge of Christ as a free perfect saviour

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salvour, is the basis and source of all gospel consolation, and is the motive and spring of all gospel obedience. If this be not perceived to be true, both doctrinally and experimentally, we shall be unavoidably tempted to lay the stress of our strength and comfort upon that which stands distinguished from Christ known and believed.

5. If it be made a matter of any importance, to conceive of or think about a principle of grace as *previous* to and *distinct* from the knowledge of Christ, this tends to cloud and contradict the free gospel: For if a person affected with a sense of guilt, or under fear of divine wrath, must be taught to conceive the necessity of a previous principle; this will naturally lead him to seek after, to pray and feel for some gracious principle in himself, as a sort of pre-requisite to justification by faith; and accordingly his mind and conscience cannot be relieved by the atonement of Christ, without his feeling or apprehending some good principle in him as previous thereto; and consequently his relief does not come to him from the atonement of Christ, but from something else along with it and distinct from it. Yea farther, if a *Believer* be taught to consider this principle as somewhat distinct or aside from the knowledge of Christ; his attention is thereby drawn away from Christ, and he is led to fix the chief of his hope and comfort upon an answer to this question, "Whether he has this distinct principle in him or no;" instead of enjoying his comfort in communion with Christ, as a free and perfect saviour, by faith, love and obedience towards him.

6. A spirit of affectionate godly jealousy obliges me to add in christian faithfulness, that all the comfort and pleasure you take or desire to take from the conception and contemplation of an inward work in your soul, separate from a direct view of Christ, known and believed, is, I am persuaded, false and delusive; and therefore I cannot in conscience give indulgence to such a desire or pleasure in the course of my preaching; and I am ready to apprehend, that 'tis because some cannot have this pleasure gratified, they are therefore induced to forsake my ministry. — By some expressions in your letter,

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letter, one would be led to think that herein consists a great part of your delight and pleasure; that you have a holy principle wrought in you, distinct from the knowledge and love of the blessed Jesus.

Nay, it is to be fear'd, that many professors do lay so great a stress upon the thought of this inward distinct principle, that they can see but very little comfort for them, or held out to them in Christ and the gospel, without some previous consciousness hereof. They therefore entertain a very low notion of the free hope of the gospel, while they have a very high opinion of the necessity of evidences reflected upon for their immediate support and comfort.—Whereas the truth is, that the more a person is supported and animated by the free open hope of the gospel, the more experience he will have of those things that are distinguishing and evidential. The influence of the free gospel hope must be continued; otherwise we shall be in the utmost danger of placing our evidences and experiences precisely in the room that a revealed saviour ought to occupy in our hearts, according to the gospel.

It is very certain that a professor may be as proud and self-confident, and take as much delight in the contemplation of a distinct principle of grace in his heart, as any Pharisee that ever lived: Upon this thought he may admire himself, and I was going to say, almost adore himself because thereof.—And thus under a notion and profession of the strictest orthodoxy, he may think and act contrary to the proper design of the spirit's work and office; for he speaks not of himself, but shows us the things of Christ.—So then, while this inward principle is considered as somewhat distinct from Christ known and believed, a person is thereby naturally led to delight in this principle, to love it, to depend upon it, &c. and indeed to exercise all those motions of heart and affection towards this principle within him, which the true spirit teaches to exercise upon Christ revealed in the word. Further,

It must be acknowledged, if we have any notion of genuine Christianity in experience or practice; that even if there were such a principle as you contend for, it must operate in *every one* of its appearances and vital

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exercises, only by and upon Jesus Christ revealed in the gospel. It must be a life of faith on the Son of God, otherwise, it will appear to be a false, enthusiastical or legal course of experience. Yea, I will venture to add, that if the principle within us be of the right stamp, we never can discern any of its effects or operations as any way distinct from the influence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. No Gospel-experience whatsoever, can discover any thing in us distinct from the knowledge of Christ and its genuine effects.

But after all, I can say in vindication of the gospel in its ancient simplicity; I am persuaded, that the prevailing bias towards a dependance upon something within us, will lead the self confident to load it with the worst of consequences; for they will still think that all those precious truths of the gospel, concerning the spirit's work, evidences of interest, Experiences of grace, and the acceptableness of gospel duties, &c. are denied or depreciated; because these things are all taken away from that place, in which the spirit of self dependance will put them; to support a false hope; and are transferred to that position, in which they ought to stand according to the truth of the gospel. And you may be sure, Sir, nothing could have induced me to make so dear a sacrifice of my reputation, interest, &c. but a sacred regard to what I esteem the momentous truth of the gospel. However then the faith I plead for may be traduced as a dead speculative thing, I hope it does and will appear, that the truth I profess will be effectual the Comfort Spirit to support the heart, and produce a steady adherence to the faith, order, worship and obedience of the gospel. And I can put up no petition at the divine throne, more important or more comprehensive in its effects than this; that the Lord, the spirit, may teach you and me more and more, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. *Know your Lord, &c.*



A
R E P L Y
T O T H E

R E F L E C T I O N S

O N A N

Epistolary Correspondence, &c.

THE author of these reflections, having quoted a few detach'd sentiments from Mr. S-----, which he looks upon as a very defective account of the nature of faith, and which would appear such at first sight to one who had never attended to this controversy; proceeds to say p. 2. That this considered barely as Mr. S-----'s, does not so much affect him, as Mr. P-----'s declaration, that these sentiments are such as he truly approves of, &c. From this remark, it appears that the whole of these reflections are levelled against me, and my profest principles. Now 'tis obvious to every one who has read the correspondence; I have taken pains in the Vth Letter to describe in the clearest manner I could, in what light I understood, and in what sense I approved of Mr. S-----'s principles.

Nothing then could be more rationally or justly expected, than that an ingenuous opponent would have taken

taken into his consideration *that* explication, and endeavour'd to disprove the sentiments *as there exhibited*. But 'tis most remarkable, that throughout these reflections not a single sentence is quoted out of that explication of my own meaning. I will not say what construction *ought* to be put upon this extraordinary piece of conduct; but only for my own part shall say, that I look upon it in the author, to be a mere piece of inadvertency, because I have, and that very justly, an high esteem for him, and a great affection for him, and am fully persuaded that he has a very affectionate regard for me. But surely, I may with a very good grace esteem this one remark a sufficient reply to all the reflections, so far as they have any relation to me or my principles.

Let me only beg the reader to peruse with attention, my *own* explication of my *own* sentiments in that Vth Letter, and I presume, that he will find the greatest part of the objections contain'd in the reflections very much weakened, if not intirely invalidated. For there he will see, the whole affair concerning justifying faith clearly stated, and in what precise sense it may be call'd *a bare belief of the bare report of the gospel*: and that it is in reality a very different thing from what the author of these reflections would seem to impute to me as my sentiment of it in this oblique manner.

According to this method of criticising upon any person and his sentiments; he may converse and write, preach and print without end, and all in vain; if there be no attention paid or shown to the explication he gives of, and the evidence he produces for his own principles.

Farther, it will plainly appear in the course of this reply, that our author has strangely mistook Mr. S—n, and has accordingly set about industriously to prove, what neither he or I ever denied, and that in several instances. Yea, it is difficult for me to believe, that our author could apprehend (however he may have mistaken Mr. S—n) that I ever denied some of the particulars which he laboriously, tho' needlessly, attempts to prove. And yet according to the first sight of these reflections, any reader would be induced to think, that I did in *every instance*, maintain those principles which

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are here purposely opposed, and denied those principles which are here purposely vindicated.

For his method of reasoning is a continued insinuation, that both Mr. S——n and I were opposers of all that he vindicates; unless there had been inserted some caveat to the contrary. It is therefore necessary for the clearing my own character, that I should make some reply. But this is far from being the chief point I have in view. For if it were, I should totally have declined any appeal to the public. My principal design is to state and defend what I esteem important gospel-truth: And therefore, overlooking this apparent piece of dissimilarity, I shall take these reflections under distinct consideration, for *the truth's sake*.

There are several hints scattered up and down in this pamphlet, tending to raise the reputation of those whom Mr. S——n opposes, and to decry the principles and spirit of Mr. S——n; which I shall but just touch upon. p. 1. Our author says, he believes them to be a set of men, who deserve to be as well spoken of as any men since the apostle's time. I think the compliment here paid them rather too high. However 'tis allowed, p. 30. that they are guilty of *improprieties and inconsistencies*. And every one who reflects upon the nature of the subject in which they appear, will find that it relates to a point of the greatest importance, wherein inconsistencies may prove very dangerous: And therefore it must be acknowledged a very needful thing, that those *improprieties and inconsistencies* should be pointed out. This is actually done with a sincere design and to great advantage, though with peculiar severity of language, in the *letters on Theron and Aspasio*.

As to what is said of the pious wrestlers, p. 15, which Mr. S——n is said to lampoon; namely, that they are the farthest from a proneness to entertain a good conceit of themselves of any men in the world: I heartily wish this character was true of them in *all* instances, as I hope it is in many: Were it so, there would have been no occasion for Mr. S——n's writing.

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But every one who knows his own heart, cannot but be sensible that there is such a proneness in him; and to a person seriously conscious of this, one would think a sincere attempt to detect and demolish it, would have been in some measure truly acceptable, tho' not conducted in the softest manner. It must be owned that Mr. S—— has treated this subject in an uncommonly close and searching way; and it is well known that there are great numbers who take his writing in good part, and are thankful for his faithfulness. And indeed, the more a christian is free from spiritual pride, the less he will be displeased with any such attempt to search him to the bottom; although it be not done in such soft language as many could wish.

But I find that many are highly displeased with him, and most strongly resent the indignity offered them: yea, upon this very account, the author is here charged with the spirit of a *deist*. A keenness of resentment indeed!

O! but it seems he has charged many with opposing the doctrines of grace, who are in reality the farthest from it, as is intimated p. 11. How far many do *in fact*, though not by *profession* or with *design*, cloud or pervert the doctrine of free justification, I shall not here set about to determine.

'Tis the business of such as count themselves injured, to clear themselves by a fair reply to his objections and contradictions, rather than to raise every where a popular clamour.

'Tis intimated p. 29. that he has charged them with opposing the true gospel *artfully*, and *with design* to false their own reputation. I would reply, that those who have read the correspondence, know how averse I am to indulge such sentiments concerning them myself; and if he really intends to stigmatize them as *designedly and knowingly* opposing or perverting what *they* accounted truth, I must disapprove of and disclaim such a thought. Neither do I in any respect make him my standard, or think myself obliged to justify him in every sentiment and expression. For I am sensible that I cannot agree with him in many particulars of less importance.

Mr.

Mr. S—— is charged in the first and last page of these reflections, with a malignant, unchristian spirit. As this sentiment is every where most zealously propagated, in order to deter persons from looking into his books, and adopting his principles, I therefore think it fit and needful to inform the public, fairly and modestly, what I think and know concerning him and his writings.

Though there are some peculiar severities in his language, yet his *letters on Theron* contain a rich fund of gospel truth, and many things truly entertaining and instructive. His main design throughout the whole, is to hold forth the comfortable evidence of the salutary truth, clear of those mixtures and mists, with which it has been often polluted and clouded. In this design he has succeeded beyond expectation, as many can testify from their own happy experience. And there are several, both ministers and others, that cannot but be thankful that ever the books came to their hands.

And lest any should be carried away with wild extravagant notions, concerning him and his sentiments; as if he were some unknown upstart, risen up with a wicked design to be a troubler of *Israel*; 'tis proper the world should know. ——— That there are at present, no less than *ten* churches of Christ in and near *Scotland*, strictly *congregational*, who pay an uncommon regard to the truths and laws of Christ; maintaining a peculiar purity of doctrine, discipline, worship and practice, according to the express injunctions of the word, and cultivating the most cordial brotherly love; and that this Mr. S—— is an elder or pastor of one of those churches. These christian societies which are formed with great exactness upon the primitive plan, as laid forth in new-testament precepts and presidents, have subsisted many years; though exposed to the utmost contempt upon account of their purity of doctrine and close adherence to the laws of Christ.

Mr. S—— and his numerous friends, are therefore well acquainted with the nature and vehemence of those reproaches that are cast upon the antient gospel-doctrine and its attending discipline. He knows more fully

fully than we can *as yet*, the nature, violence and injustice of the opposition made thereto ; which is doubtless one occasion of his writing with so much keenness. What the friends of the truth may be *obliged* to know in *these* parts, we cannot positively say : But there appears already such a spirit of unjust and unrestrained calumny, together with such resentment and indignation in our opposers; that these things make us begin to think, there is more justice in his censures and more ground for his severities, than we could at first imagine.

To give some confirmation to this view of things, I would just suggest a remark upon what is said p. 3. of these reflections, and so dismiss this disagreeable part of my subject ; where we find these words. “ And indeed, I think it remarkable, that a man of such talents for expression (meaning Mr. S———) should have entertained the world with a book, the principal scope of which is so much misunderstood by intelligent persons, as appears by Mr. P———’s first letter : nor can I guess at any other design therein, but to confound the honest minds of his readers, and thereby to make way for his favourite scheme.”

A very *uncharitable* conjecture indeed ! equal in meaning to the very heaviest charges he has ever brought against any he opposes. Whereas it has been well known for some time past, that many persons of but common capacities can clearly discern, and that with pleasure and profit, the principal scope of his books. From whence it appears, that this severe insinuation strongly favours of a peculiar pride of wisdom and intelligence : a disposition that ought to be extremely guarded against by the professors of christianity. See *Mark* xi. 25, 26. and *1 Cor.* i. 19—26.

I now address myself directly to the consideration of the sentimental part of these reflections.

Upon reading the whole over, it will presently appear, that there is a single, central point, which may be very properly call’d the *hinge* of our present controversy. Thoughts upon it are scattered up and down throughout the reflections ; but it is particularly dwelt upon

upon page 11---18. I shall not attempt in this place to transcribe every sentence, or aim to give a direct reply to every thought or argument. This I propose to do more distinctly by and by. At present it may be sufficient to observe, that the whole controversy will be comprized in an answer to this single question.

Since the gospel does not proclaim an universal redemption or salvation, how can the report it brings to our ears, when helieved, give peace to the conscience of any individual, before he can discern some saving change in himself, or some distinction for the better between himself and another?

If this one question be fairly solved, there will be made a clear way for answering all the objections produced in the reflections. I would therefore in the first Place subjoin an answer to it at large in the following manner.

THERE is a certain central truth, which runs thro' the bible from the beginning to the end, and which we may be tempted to overlook or not to discern in its proper importance and beauty, amidst a firm belief of all the distinguishing doctrines of Calvinism, as they are usually stated; and I think of no better form of expressing it at present, than this, *Jesus Christ in all his grace and fulness, is declared in the gospel for this very purpose, to appear as the only, the immediate and the sure foundation of a lost sinner's hope as such.* Without multiplying words at present to expatiate upon, to explain and prove this principle, I would rather illustrate it by setting forth some of the proper effects thereof upon the mind and heart. This truth, I say, when clearly understood and believed upon divine evidence, does immediately silence the objections and remove the discouragement of the convinced sinner. Nay, the very belief of this truth, evidently contains in it a conviction of the sinner's helpless and hopeless condition in himself; for otherwise, Christ would not appear as his *only* foundation of hope. And when the soul beholds Christ as his immediate and sure foundation, he cannot

but have some peace of conscience, and some encouraging sense of the divine free saviour; such as draws off the heart (in proportion to the efficacy of the truth upon the mind) from self, sense and sin, and produces a love to God in Christ, and so becomes a principle of all gospel-obedience. So necessary is this truth, that unless it be properly understood and cordially believed, all the other doctrines of the word can have very little efficacy upon the mind; yea, no evangelical effect at all. But if this truth be received, or introduced into the conscience; all the other doctrines of the word will be found not only consistent with it, but connected with it, illustrated by it and subservient to it. This central doctrine is what is more emphatically called *the Truth* or *the Gospel*; and stands distinguished from the other truths of the word in several passages of sacred writ. For instance, is the doctrine of particular election a gospel truth? We are said to be *chosen*: to salvation thro' sanctification of the spirit and belief of *the truth*. Is the doctrine of *Regeneration* a divine truth? We are said to be begotten, thro' *the Gospel*, or with the *word of truth*. As to *Adoption*, 'tis said, we are all the children of God, by *faith* in Christ Jesus. As to *sanctification*, 'tis said we are sanctified thro' *the truth*: and as to *perseverance*, 'tis plain, we are kept by the power of God, thro' *faith* unto salvation: and so as to *spiritual consolation*, 'tis evident, we are filled with all joy and peace in *believing*. This central truth is the principal and proper matter of faith, and Christ or God in Christ appearing in it, is the proper and only object of faith. In beholding and believing the absolute necessity, intire perfection and the immediate unconditional freeness of God's grace in Christ, we have our self-righteous confidence opposed and suppress'd, and have the discouragements of our souls in measure removed. In this truth we have Christ and all his salvation brought near, exceedingly, immediately near to our souls and to our case; so that nothing appears to stand between him and us, however unworthy, guilty, polluted and miserable we have been; and therefore as soon as ever it is rightly perceived, and actually believed, we being justified by faith, have peace with

with God, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

'Tis evident, I am not here pleading for what is commonly call'd a bare *historical* faith; wherein a person looks upon himself as a sort of a by-stander, with respect to the matter of his faith: For whosoever does not see that the gospel-report points directly at *him* and at his own case, cannot be said to apprehend the truth in its proper light. It is indeed certain, that almost every other doctrine may be perceived in a kind of speculative or historical manner: a person may believe and contemplate the doctrines of particular election and redemption as a by-stander, because he does not see his own immediate personal concern in it. The same may be said of the doctrines of efficacious grace, and of the saints perseverance. If a person does not see that what the gospel says of Christ and salvation by him is entirely necessary for him, exactly suited to his case, and free for his use, he is still kept at some distance; apprehending the doctrines of grace, to be little more than a general declaration of what God intends to do or has done upon or for *some* sinners, without seeing any personal concern of his own in the matter.

I am very sensible that the true peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, are often conceived in such a light as to become a sort of objection against the open freeness of the hope held forth in the gospel: For we are very ready to say in our mind, that since God does not tell us who in particular were elected and redeemed, or who shall be wrought upon effectually, &c. therefore a person must be sensible of some visible or real change past upon him for the better, before he may or can venture to receive any degree of satisfying hope in Christ Jesus revealed in the gospel. But if we can recollect that particular election and redemption, and that the operations of the spirit are intended to bring sinners to know and embrace this hope of the gospel; it will then appear that all these doctrines are rather a confirmation of, than an objection against this blessed hope. For the conscientious belief of this gospel truth, is above and contrary to our natures; as it draws us off from all that which we are naturally attach'd to and fond of.

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We are always inclined to oppose, mistake, despise or suspect this hope; and are very ready to understand the gospel, in such a light as leaves some room for self-dependence, self-indulgence, or for entertaining some delusive hopes. For these reasons, together with others, there is an intire necessity for the divine agency of the holy spirit, to introduce it into our consciences and maintain it in our hearts. I might here further observe, that this truth makes the gospel-hope appear so *free* and humbling, that we naturally scorn it, as it sets us all upon a level before God: That it appears to us to be very *defective*, narrow, weak and foolish; because it does not give us directly such a full satisfaction concerning our own special interest, as should leave us in a kind of state of safety somewhat independent upon God in Christ believed on: That it is *offensive* to our corrupted nature, because it obliges us to live so near to and so constantly dependent upon an infinitely holy and sovereign God. In a word, our natural wish and desire is, to have something in our selves to be a ground and reason of peace and hope towards God; and therefore we are fond of leaning upon and desirous to prop up some such kind of hope; while we are averse to and suspicious of that sure foundation which God has laid in Zion; because it is something distinct from the consideration of any thing in ourselves. All these things, with many more, concur to render it necessary for a divine almighty agency to be employed in writing this truth upon our hearts. But when this supernatural truth is made by the spirit to take possession of our souls, it draws us off from our natural wish and desire, from self-dependence and self-indulgence, and leads us to look to and live upon God in Christ as our only and entire hope and portion, as our free refuge and sanctuary. Hereupon there begin to appear some evidences of our particular election and redemption. The immortal seed of the word is sown in the heart, a new principle introduced, a new spring of affections and actions is given; whereby the soul is render'd capable of holding communion with God, and aims from *this* hope and love after conformity to Christ. And as such things as these appear and advance in the affections and conduct, the evidences

of a special interest in Christ are discovered. Not that this person's hope, pleasure and satisfaction arises only or chiefly from these evidences of interest; but from the glory, perfection and freeness of divine grace appearing in a revealed Christ. For 'tis this which he has all along in his eye, for his hope and dependence, while he advances forward in bringing forth such fruits of faith as show him to be a disciple of Christ. In proportion then, as the believer is favour'd with this satisfaction from the freeness of divine grace revealed and the fruits of it appear; in that proportion his evidences are brightened: But as these things decline, his evidences of interest disappear.

I am very sensible after all that has been said, that the turning, pinching point lies in this question:

Is it possible for that truth, which has a uniform aspect towards all sinners as such, and which is as true concerning those that perish as those that are saved, to give any solid satisfaction, or to afford solid hope to any individual? An answer to this question in the affirmative, may readily be accounted very enthusiastical; and the laying any stress upon such a truth for satisfying peace and hope, may be thought both unaccountable and dangerous; as if there *could not be* sufficient in it, to bear the weight that is laid upon it. But let not our reason at once boldly judge it to be impossible! Who knows what the wisdom of God can contrive and declare? And I hope to make it appear both from fact, from doctrine and from experience, that this is the very case with respect to the important doctrine before us. Unless there be a truth in this, the gospel cannot be accounted glad tidings of great joy to *all people*: The joy of the primitive Christians upon their first apprehending and believing the gospel, will appear to be without a proper foundation. And unless there be some solid joy and peace to be had from the pure gospel believed, we could never be able to perform any duties, or exercise any graces in an evangelical way, until we could arrive at some assurance of our own personal interest: but how any such assurance can be had, before evangelical duties are perform'd, or gospel experiences felt, is not conceivable.

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But after all, it will still be enquired: Is it possible for a person to receive any solid satisfaction from a doctrine that is as true concerning those that perish, as those that are saved. I answer, we need not look far for proper similitudes to illustrate this matter by. If two persons are under the same disease, and both of them are told of the same free remedy; he that upon the relation believes the remedy to be effectual and free, is immediately comforted in his mind with hopes of a cure, and accordingly applies; while he that suspects either the efficacy or freeness of it, receives no relief to his mind about it, and perhaps perishes under the disease; though the remedy was as effectual in its nature, and as free in itself, with respect to his case as to the other's. I might add a variety of similar comparisons, borrowed both from nature and scripture, to exemplify or familiarize this subject: such as a testimony concerning a free gift to be receiv'd; a free prop to lean upon, &c. Now in such cases as these, it is certain, that if a person's mind be not in some measure relieved, pacified and encouraged by such a report, he does not really believe it, however he may profess it; but entertains some objections or scruples in his mind about it, unless he be supposed to be absolutely stupid and unconcerned about his own disease, want, or danger; in which case 'tis plain, he is not apprized of the necessity of such a relief for himself. Now when a person receives his hope and peace from such a free open testimony, he is not relieved by the thought of any difference between him and another, to whom it is as free and suitable as to himself; neither does he apprehend himself to have a better right or a clearer interest than another: but his satisfaction arises from the truth reported, which he apprehends and believes, though another does not. Now to bring this over to spiritual concerns. The free grace truth of the gospel affords hope and encouragement, and becomes the foundation of all those actings of the believing soul, commonly called *acts of faith*, but may be more properly called actings of *love* (for faith always operates by love) such as *trusting, coming, embracing* and the like; for no person will come to Christ.

Christ or trust in God, or embrace the promises, unless he has first a *love* in his soul to God in Christ, arising from a view and belief of his free grace. Neither are these actings of the mind to be considered as any arduous or difficult attempt in order to obtain peace and hope towards God; for they naturally arise and flow from the encouraging and soul-pacifying truth believed. They are merely motions or thoughts of the mind, generated and excited by the gracious truth believed. For in such spiritual cases we must cast aside all the external acts of the body, by which they are represented and expressed, and built upon. While this truth is clear in a person's mind; he can and does rest upon it, or rather upon God in Christ revealed therein: and so it becomes his continual support and refreshment, yea, and his continual motive to love and obedience. This is living by the faith of the son of God. And in proportion as a person is quickened, enliven'd, animated and supported hereby; in that proportion he is conscious of his connection with Christ, and vital union to him: because he now knows and feels in his own heart, that he has his strength and comfort directly and immediately from Christ revealed. Thus God gives his people a sense of his love, an enjoyment of his favour, and a proof, seal, or evidence of their own interest in him. If a person loses sight of the truth, or is turned from it in any degree; he so far can have no true rest, and is in danger of seeking rest from some other quarter, or settling his hopes upon some false foundation. Thus he loses the true enjoyment of God's favour, and can never be recovered to it, but by being driven off from every other attempt, and having this truth afresh revived upon his mind, by some means or other. And among the various methods which the spirit may use to recover a backslider, an eminent one is: to bring to remembrance past experiences of the efficacy of the gospel: not that his comfort may arise from those experiences, but from that free and perfect grace that lay at the foundation of them. The belief of this truth, together with its genuine influence upon the heart and conduct, is that which distinguishes believers from unbelievers. And whatever physical influences of the spirit may be supposed

posed in the matter of regeneration and sanctification, separate from the truth believed; these can have no apparent share in pacifying the conscience and comforting the heart, as they are in their own nature utterly invisible, and so cannot become a matter of christian experience. Neither must any thing previous to or distinct from the thought of a free and perfect saviour be here admitted, for giving ease to the conscience: if it be, the peace resulting from thence is delusive, and derogatory to the aliusiciency of Christ's work.

I would farther observe, that upon this plan, true holiness and true consolation keep pace with each other; untill we come to such a situation, as to be beyond all hazard of losing this holy injoyment in any degree; which cannot be till we come to glory. Thus likewise the believer is kept in a state of constant immediate dependence upon God: so that while he is guarded against any abuses on the one hand, lest a promise being left of entering into God's rest, he should seem to come short of it; he has on the other hand, sufficient incouragement and pleasure in the way of gospel holiness; being attracted and enliven'd by the continual hope of the free gospel. The believer has at no time ground to say, "My mountain stands strong and I shall never be mov'd," but he has at all times reason to say, "The Lord is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;" and he actually does say it in his heart, as long as he is favour'd with the sight of the necessity, sufficiency and freeness of divine grace in Christ for himself.

The believer's peace and joy then, rises and sinks just in proportion as he perceives the evidence of this gospel truth, as pointing to himself as well as to any other; accordingly, he cannot tread in any forbidden path for peace and comfort with this truth in his eye, without being struck with the solemn reflection, that he is now departing from the true God, undervaluing the hope of the gospel, and despising that love which is as jealous as it is attractive. The room that is left for this solemn reflection, is that which keeps us in a state and sense of absolute, constant, immediate dependence upon God in Christ. This is indeed what we very much want, and aim to be set free from in

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some degree and in some way or another. But the gospel in its purity will not permit it. Let it not here be thought, that this manner of stating things produces a slavish fear of divine wrath; for he is not afraid of evil tidings whose heart is fixed trusting in the Lord. So that his fear, only serves to keep or drive him from every false way and dangerous refuge, and to fix his heart and hope upon God in Christ, as his only hope and portion.

Thus I have giv'n as clear a view as I can of the nature, importance and genuine influence of what I esteem the cardinal point of the glorious gospel: In doing which I apprehend I have weaken'd and invalidated the greatest part of the reasonings contain'd in the reflections: And a person must either disprove this cardinal sentiment, or else make it appear from reason, that this sentiment is not sufficient when really believed to pacify the conscience &c. if he intends to overturn this view of the gospel.

In the mean time, I must take it for granted that a person who discerns the true meaning, the divine evidence, and vast importance of this truth to himself; will bless God for it, rejoice in it, take his peace from it as a revelation of a free and perfect saviour; and will ascribe the genuine influence and efficacy of it to the holy spirit, who alone can write it in the heart.

But if this salutary truth in its beauty, usefulness and freeness be not received into the heart; all the reasoning in the world cannot prevail upon a person to think otherwise, than that he must perceive something distinguishing about himself to furnish him with a reason of hope: Or which is in reality the same thing, he must have something besides, or along with the redemption of Christ in view, in order to his hope towards God. And consequently, whatsoever peace such a person has, it does not come to him *properly* and only from the blood and righteousness of Christ. Yet in these circumstances he will appear so ignorant of his own heart, as to think himself very clear of self confidence, and be greatly displeased, if he be suspected of it: whereas this very disposition more abundantly manifests, to every one

who knows the gospel and himself, that this person is under the prevailing power of it.

But as some may think this reply too general, and should therefore desire to know how to apply it to the various objections found in the reflections; I will run through the pages thereof, with this sacred truth continually before me, that it may be readily seen what sentiments exhibited in the reflections are just and true, and how each objection may be answered.

I should then begin with explaining what Mr. S—n means by intimating, that a person finds peace with God by the *simple notion of the truth*. But the author of the reflections has (tho' undesignedly, yet clearly) explained and fully justified both the sentiment itself and this form of expressing it: tho' for my part, I am not fond of this phraseology, because 'tis frequently misunderstood. For he says p 3. That if the atonement were of universal extent, the *bare notion* of it may relieve the Soul: and again p 11. more expressly, "If the gospel held forth the atonement of Christ as made for all the sins of every individual of mankind, I could easily see the connection between the belief of such a report, and immediate relief to a condemn'd sinner; yea and all that joy which such a belief is said to produce." Now what I would have observed here is this: If it be acknowledged that a *bare notion* of universal redemption would relieve the conscience; the reason must be, because such a sentiment contains in itself sufficient to relieve the mind. If then there be any sentiment exhibited in the gospel that contains sufficient in itself to relieve the conscience; it follows according to our author's own way of reasoning, that a person would find peace merely in and by *that notion*. Now, tho' it be far from being true that the gospel proclaims an universal redemption; yet nothing is more true, and encourageing than this; that it proclaims compleat redemption *universally* to the belief of mankind for salvation by it. For the gospel is written, that we might believe that Jesus is the son of God, and that believing we might have life thro' his name. John xx. 31. That to us thro' Jesus Christ is preached the forgiveness of sins, so that all who believe are justified *As*

xiii. 38, 39. That the gospel is of such a nature that whosoever believeth shall be saved *Mark* xvi. v. 16 *Rom.* i. 16. see likewise *John* iii. 14—18 and ver. 36, and 1 *John* v. 1, 9,—12. These and many other texts of like import, plainly inform us that there is such a truth held forth in the gospel, as is in itself sufficient to relieve the guilty conscience; and therefore if a person obtains a just notion of it, his conscience is pacified by the truth he believes: because he finds in the divine testimony all that represented as compleatly purchased which is necessary to his salvation, and proclaimed for his immediate relief and rest in Christ's compleat redemption. The perfect work of Christ is therefore presented in the gospel to be directly believed on, as the *only*, the *sure*, the *immediate* ground of a sinner's peace and hope before God. And if this testimony believed in the conscience will not convey peace, I know not what will, or can. For Christ and his apostles unite in maintaining, that the work of Christ is sufficient to justify sinners without any of their concurrence, and that whosoever are so perswaded in their hearts and consciences find salvation therein. Blessed truth indeed for the lost and helpless! while at the same time it looks with a very frowning aspect upon those who think something more is necessary to be done or known in order to the satisfaction of the conscience and the justification of the person. Now, tho' hereby every act and exercise of our souls is excluded as previously necessary to peace with God; yet no sooner does a person perceive the glory, perfection and freeness of this redemption for himself, and so has peace; but he is directly induced and encouraged to the exercises of trusting, relying and depending upon that which gives him relief. So that we may safely say, justification takes place by means of a report of what Christ has done; and that 'tis this work of Christ reported and believed, which makes men acceptable to God and heals the wounded conscience. And it is worthy of special observation, that as *justification* is a law term, regarding the pronouncing a sentence; the same blessed truth which when believed gives peace to the conscience, does likewise contain, and pronounce the sentence of justification upon the be-

liever. In p. 3, our author seems to be at a loss to know what Mr. S—— means by justification itself: whereas it is very evident, he all along means the same thing by it, that all orthodox divines do. Namely a discharge from legal guilt, and an unalienable title to eternal life, thro' the righteousness of Christ imputed; which important blessing commences actually at believing. And this sentiment our author knows I always maintained; and therefore the formal proof of it in p. 4, was needless, and injuriously insinuates to the world as if it were denied by me.

But what has confused our author is, that Mr. S—— has exprest the following evangelical, humbling, but most comfortable sentiment; "That one who is a true believer, may find himself in various respects, obnoxious to the curse of the divine law; and that he may be comforted of God and sealed to the day of redemption, even while he appears in the eyes of the world and his own eyes, as an out-cast and fit to be rejected." But where is the true believer that does not find himself, I will not say in various respects, but in every respect obnoxious to the curse, any farther than as he apprehends, the compleat redemption of Christ for his only immediate refuge and shelter? And does not every believer continually see, that he, in himself considered, is an out-cast and fit to be rejected; and more especially at the time when he is comforted of God, and sealed by the spirit? Thus the deepest humility and the most spiritual consolation, are beautifully connected together in the experience of genuine christianity. But this sentiment, it seems, is become very confused and unintelligible. Be that as it will, it must be insisted upon as a most necessary consistent and refreshing truth; well adapted to raise the hopes of the broken hearted, as well as to detect and suppress a spirit of self conceit. And to allude to what is said at the bottom of p. 15. It cannot appear very evident, that those who are startled and stumbled by such a sentiment, are the farthest from a proneness to entertain a good conceit of themselves, of any men in the world. But to proceed,

Our author having in p. 4. given a just account of the

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the nature of justification, as if it were denied; goes on to speak of justifying faith: insisting upon it, that there must be in it the acts of *approbation* and *confidence*, as well as the notion and belief of the truth. That every one who knows the truth does therefore *love* it, and takes encouragement from it to *confide* in Christ, is readily allowed. But if these acts of approbation and confidence are to be exerted as necessary in order to peace of conscience from the blood of Christ revealed, (when they are, if true, really the effect of such a spiritual pacification) they will then, upon close examination, appear to be of such a nature, and to be exerted for such an end, as to become a legal and pharisaical opposition to the antient gospel; because they plainly intimate, that the blood of Christ is not revealed sufficiently free to pacify the conscience, without the previous exertion of some act of ours.

In order to prove his point, the author proceeds to produce some instances from scripture, such as the faith of *Judas*, of *Simon*, of the stony ground hearers, and of the *Antinomians*, and the like, in p. 5, 6, 7. But 'tis very remarkable, that in all these instances, except that of *Judas*, there was *approbation*, *confidence* and *joy*, along with or following upon their faith: from whence 'tis evident, that the joining of such acts or experiences as these, along with the bare notion, will not be sufficient to compleat the definition of faith upon this plan. We must then seek for some other method of distinguishing a false faith from a true; otherwise we shall be misled, as 'tis to be feared many are, upon this way of stating it. What if after all these laboured complicated definitions of faith, it should appear, that the difference between one sort of faith and another, does not lie in any of the circumstances or consequences of it; but only in this, that what one believes is *the truth*, while what another believes is a falsehood, or some lie connected with the truth. Then we shall have a clear rule to go by, to judge of the truth or falsehood of a person's faith, and the purity of those acts of the mind which follow upon it. Now this will presently be found to be the case, as to all the instances referred to.

1. The stony-ground-hearers; they received the word with joy, and consequently had an approbation of it, a delight in and dependence upon it. Where then lay the defect? Was it a want of the exertion of any act, or the like? No, for if we attend to our Lord's own account, 'twas this. They did not *understand* the meaning or importance of the word they believed. For the difference between the faith of these, and of true believers, is said to consist in this; that the latter heard the word and understood it, and therefore brought forth fruit; intimating that the others did not understand it. *Matt. xiii. 21, 23.*

2. *Simon Magus*, he abode with *Philip* and wondered, *Acts viii. 13*, but the defect in his faith soon appeared to be this: that under his belief and profession, he had not received the true notion of the *freeness* of divine grace; because he thought the gift of God might be purchased, *verse 20*. Thus many now profess faith, and yet still believe some act of theirs is previously necessary for obtaining the divine favour to the satisfaction of their souls.

3. *Judas*, though he witnessed to the truth of our Lord's doctrine, by confessing that he had betrayed innocent blood; yet, 'tis plain, he did not believe that blood to be immediately and sufficiently free for his salvation; because he went away and hanged himself in despair.

4. As to the faith of *Antinomians*; does the defect of that lie in a want of love to, delight in, or dependence upon what they believe? No, but in their not believing or not understanding how jealous, as well as how engaging, God appears in the display of his love in the gospel: for if they did, they could have no satisfaction but in loving and obeying him. The opinion of the apostle *John* concerning such is, that they are liars, and the truth is not in them. *1 John ii. 4.*

5. The appeal made to those who were early instructed in the doctrines of grace, but were not converted till afterwards, can be of no weight to those in this case, who take the scriptures *only* for their rule. And many questions may here be put, which may tend to weaken the evidence of many conversions. But I would

would ask in brief, Whether they had before any hope of salvation; if they had, 'tis plain, that former hope was founded upon a lie, or the belief of a destructive falsehood, which is certainly contradictory to the belief of the real truth.

Upon the whole then, I must conclude, that a right notion and real belief of the truth, will be productive of spiritual and saving fruits; and that wheresoever it appears, a person's profession is not followed by or attended with such fruits, it is either because he understands not the meaning and importance of what he believes, or else professes with his mouth, what he does not believe in his heart. And though they may evidently appear to have the notion and belief of the truth, yet the dominion and indulgence of sin proves their profession to be a lie. *2 Pet. i. 2. 1 John i. 6.*

I am in the next place led to consider these actings of the soul termed *trusting, looking, &c.* For our author says p. 8. "that the scripture frequently represents faith as the *trust, reliance or dependance* of the soul upon Christ, and a *looking* to him; and adds, "that the following passages plainly declare this, unless some art be used to evade the sense of them." Well then; it seems I must not touch upon this string without falling under the imputation of using *artifice*. But to be serious; for 'tis a matter of great moment. Our author mentions *Rom. xv. 12.* In him shall the gentiles *trust*. *Isa. xlv. 22. Look unto me, &c. John vi. 9. that ye believe on him, &c. Rom. iv. 5. to him that believeth on him that justifieth.*

He might have quoted innumerable other passages, and have mention'd many other *actings* of the mind or expressions of them, such as *coming, leaning, embracing, resting, waiting, &c.* But in reply to the whole that is intended thereby, I would without using much art say,

1. The scripture does not represent these actings to be *Faith* itself, but to be the actings of a believing soul, flowing from the truth already believed in the heart; even that truth which by its own influence in the hands of the spirit, pacifies the conscience.

2. None of these actings can be exerted previous to

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hope and love : and consequently they cannot belong to faith as it justifies, unless we say that we are justified by *hope and love* as well as by faith ; for no person will come, trust, embrace, &c. unless he hopes and loves.

3. These actings of the mind are of the same nature, whatever be the object of them. Some trust in, look to, embrace, or lean upon one thing, and some upon another. So that the act itself, as an act of ours, is not to be considered as having any kind of influence into our justification ; but the whole that is to be consider'd, is, the exchange of one object for another : And how is this change made, but by a persons being brought to know and believe that, which he did not know or believe before. — So that the whole of this change centers in, is founded upon, and is produced by a belief of what was not believed before.

4. In all these actings of the mind, a person receives his satisfaction by believing, previous to his exerting of them : for a person would never come, trust, look, embrace, &c. unless he was before satisfied of, and satisfied by the freeness and fulness of what he exercises these acts upon.

5. If we are supposed to strive or aim at the exertion of these acts, as previously necessary to obtain peace to our minds ; we immediately turn the gospel into a new law, requiring certain duties to be performed, in order to our justification ; even tho' we modestly suppose that the divine spirit assists us in it or prompts us to it : which I will venture to say he never did, *for this end* ; because this would be depreciating the all-sufficiency of Christ's work revealed in the gospel, to pacify the conscience : Once more,

6. If a person must be urged to these actings as previous to the pacifying his conscience, he will then have no peace from the blood and work of Christ properly speaking ; but from the pains he takes to perform these acts, or the reflection he makes upon the right performance of them. Thus the helpless and despairing, finding no capacity to exert them, will be deprest still lower ; and those that think they have perform'd them right, will be comforted from the consideration of the rectitude

rectitude of their own actions, instead of being led alone to the redemption of Christ.

Our author proceeds p. 9, to say, that the simple notion of the truth cannot justify; for two persons, says he, may have the same idea or notion of gospel truth, while one receives it as *true* and the other rejects it as *false*. As every one will presently perceive how little this is to the purpose, I shall only say, He has fallen upon the only two ways in which the *same* thing may be believed; namely, that one may believe it to be *true*, and another believe it to be *false*, if this may be called believing it. This at once sets aside all other ways of believing.

But for him to insist upon it that *approbation* and cordial *love* of the gospel truth believed, is included in justifying faith (as he does in this and the next paragraph) and that even as an *exercise* or *experience* of our own souls, is the same as to say flatly, that we are justified by *love*; which no Calvinist was ever willing to allow. Tho' every one who knows and believes the truth, cannot but love it; yet this method of reasoning, does so confound the distinction between *faith* and *love*, that 'tis difficult to say what uniform notion we must form of either. 'Tis certainly absurd to agree with the apostles in maintaining, that we are justified by *faith* and not by *love*, and yet so to explain faith as to include love in it. Few Calvinists, indeed, chuse to insist upon the previous necessity of love in order to justification; that would be too flat a contradiction to the express language of the apostles: they only venture to insist upon the necessity of approbation, desires, embracing, longing, and every thing that belongs to love, but its proper name. Our author has only forgot himself a little here, in speaking out so plainly; that justifying faith includes the *love* of the truth. But thus the doctrine of justification by faith alone is effectually overturn'd: for we may as well be said to be justified by repentance, sincerity and obedience, &c. as by *love*. As to the text, he adduces for this *Rom. x. 9, 10*, that we must believe with the *heart*; it is evident that this only stands in opposition to the profession with the *mouth*; and so can mean nothing more than a belief of the

the truth in the heart and conscience; since many persons profess with their mouth, what they do not really believe in their hearts.

But our author is still so fond of conceiving some activity of ours in the matter of our justification, and obtaining peace to our consciences, that he will maintain a very important difference between believing *the doctrine* of Christ, and believing *on the person* of Christ; because he thinks the latter does necessarily include our activity, whether the former does or no. But let us here recur to our bibles; and we shall presently see that the scripture maintains no such distinction. For it frequently uses these two phrases as intending the very same thing. See *John viii. 30.* As Christ spake these words, many believed on him: The next words are, Then said Jesus to the Jews which believed on him; in the Greek, it is, merely *believed him*; intending evidently the same by both. So in *John xiv. 11, 12*; again *John v. 24*, Verily I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life. Now tho' in the Greek it is here simply, he that *believeth him*: Yet our translators have render'd it as above; as if sensible that the former was equivalent to the latter; as indeed it evidently is and must be in this text. Again, *Rom. x. 9.* the believing in the heart the resurrection of Christ, is made of the same import with believing on him, verse 11. I will indeed readily acknowledge that in some cases, believing of a person and believing on him, are very distinct: As when a person relates to me a matter of fact, which properly regards neither himself nor me, I then simply believe him. But in the present truth, Jesus Christ presents himself to us directly as the only free and allsufficient saviour; and therefore the believing of this doctrine, and believing on his person, must be essentially the same. From this one plain thought we may easily learn, what construction to put upon those passages, which are here adduced to support the above groundless distinction. *John iii. 14, 15.* As Moses lifted up, &c. Here Jesus Christ, the subject and substance of the gospel report is represented in allusion to the brazen serpent, as lifted up in the gospel-declaration; and the immediate effect

of the belief thereof, is exprest by believing on him, which is equivalent to *looking upon him*. Numb. xxi, 8.

John vi, 40. He that *seeth* the son and *believeth on* him, shall have everlasting life. This is parallel to those two phrases concerning the old testament saints, who *saw* the promises afar off, and *were persuaded* of them. *Heb. xi, 13.*

Heb. vi, 18. Who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them. This *fleeing* is evidently consequent upon their beholding and believing the hope set before them. And if any of these consequent acts, exercises or workings of the believer's heart be taken into faith as it justifies, 'tis then evident we are justified by *works*.

As for that passage *John vi, 29.* This is the work of God, that ye believe on him who he hath sent. The next verse shows us, that the Jews understood Christ better than many do now; for they immediately subjoin, What sign shewest thou, that we may see and *believe thee*; what dost *thou* work. Having their thoughts led by this expression entirely to think of what *Christ* was to work, and not what they were to do themselves. But for brevities sake, I beg leave to refer to the *Letters on Theron, p. 368, 369*, where this text is particularly considered. In a word, if believing on Christ be considered as any thing distinct from or farther than believing of him, it must be ranked with *fleeing*, *trusting*, *embracing*, &c. which are all the exercises of one already justified; already made to hope and love, and having his conscience already pacified by the free grace reveal'd in the gospel.

The remark upon *1 John v, 1*, whoso believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, in *p 9, 10.* is not opposite to Mr. S——n's notion; tho' our author apprehends it to be so. This text is indeed a description of a regenerate soul; and a man may safely conclude he is born again, if he be conscious that his faith in this truth is productive of love to God and his people; if it overcomes the world, and induces him to obey the divine commands. Only we must agree with the apostle that this truth (Jesus is the Christ) is of such a glorious important and attractive nature, that whosoever believes it

it in its proper import, is born of God. But if we consider any of the effects hereof appearing in love and obedience as included in justifying faith, we overturn the gospel.

In p. 111. our author sets together in contrast the very clearest part of the profession of Calvinistic divines, and the very keenest reflection of Mr. S— upon them; in order to render *them* the more amiable, and *him* the more odious: Yet our author himself must be conscious that Mr. S—'s reflection was not pointed against any part of this good profession, but against what appeared in their writings opposite it. Yea, so good is this profession, that had not Mr. S— discerned sentiments expressed in their works inconsistent with it and subversive of it, all his reflections on them had been spared.

If he has not proved this, by fair quotations from them, and reasonings thereon; let them vindicate themselves in a proper way. While I have nothing to do with this paragraph, but to take notice of a gloss put upon that phrase, *receiving* the gift of righteousness, Rom. v. 17. "Why (says our author) should the soul's *receiving* the free gift of righteousness, be treated as an opposition to the gospel, any more than a beggar's receiving an alms be esteemed an affront to the generosity of the giver." I the rather remark upon this reasoning, because we have herein a clear specimen, showing how the gospel may be effectually perverted and overturned, under the clearest profession and expressions of the freeness of divine grace; which is the very *share* that Mr. S— aims to discover and expose.

Though it would be very difficult to prove, that in this text Rom. v. 17. the *receiving* intends any other than a *passive* reception: yet as this term is often used *actively* in scripture; let us see how the soul's activity in receiving the divine gift may be so explained as utterly to overthrow the freeness of grace. Though a person may profess to renounce in the most perfect manner all qualifications, principles, duties or any thing else in himself or in any creature, as having any share in procuring acceptance with God (and this is that best part of the Calvinistic profession which is set forth

forth in this paragraph) yet he may still consider his own act of *receiving* as previously necessary to his justification and peace of conscience before God. Now here our justification is supposed to be suspended upon the exertion of this act; and our peace of conscience, upon a consciousness of having exerted it. And if we look a little closer into the nature of this act, we shall find it to include almost every qualification we can think of: For I suppose this act of receiving must be performed *humily, penitently, sincerely, thankfully, affectionately, &c.* otherwise it will not do its office effectually. And thus *humility, repentance, sincerity, thankfulness and love; &c.* are all brought in as previously necessary to our justification and spiritual peace with God. If this be not mixing some works of ours with Christ's righteousness in the matter of our justification, I cannot imagine what is. But to prevent all this from being esteemed a contradiction to the freeness of grace, it is supposed that a person is by the holy spirit assisted in or excited to perform this act in a proper manner, in order to or as previously necessary to justification and peace. Thus the divine spirit, whose work is to reveal and apply Christ as intirely free, is brought in as enabling a person to perform an act which radically contains every qualification in some degree, in order to his justification. And what is the consequence of all? Even this, That a person is taught to take his hope of the divine favour, from his being conscious of his rightly performing this act with all its attendant properties, instead of receiving it purely from the consideration of the freeness of the gift. Upon this plan, what can a poor guilty soul think, or how can he have any solid hope, who finds to the contrary of all these experiences in himself? Why, he must be next to a state of despair; or must strive and pray that he may be able to exert the act in a proper manner, as a sort of pre-requisite to his justification, &c. But if in the midst of this serious perplexity and confusion, the immediate freeness of divine grace, should by the spirit appear to his view, breaking thro' all these mists and solving all these difficulties; he is then at once relieved in a very different way: and being thus released from his bondage, by a

sight and sense of free, entirely free grace; his soul now is quicken'd and encouraged to all those actings of receiving, embracing, trusting, &c. which the scriptures represent as flowing from a genuine apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ.—The reason of my insisting upon this so distinctly, will be very apparent to every one who knows the nature of the present controversy; and hereby I am brought regularly to view the very centre of the argument. For at the bottom of this 11th page, our author directly and professedly enters upon it, and continues it thro' p. 12, 13, 14. The whole that he says is aim'd to prove, That there is not and cannot be sufficient in the gospel declaration believed, to afford immediate peace to the guilty conscience of a sinner; because it does not proclaim an universal salvation and redemption. As I have already given at large a view of this important matter, and as our author has all along kept out of sight the immediate freeness of divine grace; I shall not attempt a formal reply to every sentiment and argument, but shall rather frame an imitation of his language; inserting all along that *freeness* of grace which he has not in sight, and so shall for the most part express my own sentiments nearly in his phraseology.

If the atonement to divine justice be only for a determinate unknown number; such a declaration of itself, could not pacify my conscience, as it does not distinguish the redeemed from others; unless I could perceive likewise in the gospel, the redemption of Christ presented freely for the immediate relief of the guilty, assuring them of a free welcome. And therefore till something appears from the word of God to the conscience, of the absolute freeness of divine grace for a sinner as such, just as he stands; a man's state must to himself be doubtful, and a ground of solid comfort, peace of conscience, and spiritual joy must be wanting. But when this salutary truth is brought to the conscience in its importance and excellency, it produces such a spiritual peace, as distinguishes a believer from an unbeliever, and becomes the spring of all gracious affections in the soul.

If then the mind be elated with joy, without the proper evidence of this blessed gospel striking the conscience ; such joy must be enthusiastic, or self righteous, being founded upon something in ourselves, instead of being founded entirely and directly upon the work and redemption of Christ. What a damp must it strike upon one who is contemplating upon the importance, necessity and value of the blessings Christ has purchased, should such a thought as this come across his mind. " But 'tis quite certain, whether I am well-
" come to Christ as I am, unless I could discern or
" make some difference in myself for the better, be-
" tween me and another." Yet such a state of mind as this is frequently inculcated.

I readily own, that the belief of particular redemption as generally stated, very properly affords *some* degree of hope ; for as *some* shall be saved, peradventure I may be of that number. But I cannot admit that this declaration is of itself a sufficient warrant for a sinner as such, immediately to trust in Christ for his own salvation. If it be granted that there is such a truth in the gospel as should warrant such immediate reliance, the whole of what I contend for, is actually granted ; and all the reasonings of our author are rendered thereby invalid : unless there be some latent reserve or mistake. For perhaps after all this acknowledgment, it may still be supposed, that the sinner, in order to have a satisfying hope towards God, through the freeness of grace revealed, must first prove himself to be sufficiently and truly convinced, or must be conscious that he has performed this act of trust aright ; from which consideration his conscience is pacified, rather than pacified purely by the view of free grace, upon which he is encouraged to hope. It is not an uncommon thing to find, that after there have been to appearance some of the clearest, strongest and grandest things spoken and acknowledged about the freeness of divine grace ; by and by, the whole is so explained away, as to come forth to mean nothing else, than that *assistance is granted by the spirit, and encouragement held forth in the word, for a sinner to exert some act, or feel some promising experience, upon the consciousness of which*

he receives peace! Thus the whole doctrine of free-grace and of the spirit's work terminates here; that *the sinner is encouraged by the gospel, and enabled by the spirit to take the proper immediate reason of his hope from something felt or done by himself.*

Let us now suppose a sinner to be perplex'd in his thoughts, by considering that the atonement was only for a part of mankind, and that he is attending to such solemn passages as these. He that believes not shall be damned. *Mark* xvi. 16. Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish. *Luke* xiii. 3. Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. *John* iii. 3. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. *Heb.* xii. 14. From hence he *naturally* gathers, that he can have no peace to his conscience, unless he finds reason to conclude that he is a believer, a penitent, a renewed man, and one sanctified by the spirit. What a surprising relief must it be to his mind which is thus perplexed for want of, and is seeking earnestly after something in himself to afford him peace; to be struck with the evidence which the gospel affords for the immediate freeness of the grace revealed by Christ. He now finds peace coming into his conscience from thence, directly in a way of believing; whereby he is taught to know, that all gospel-repentance, renovation and sanctification, which are really necessary to salvation, are founded upon and are the natural product of that peace hope and love, which come into the mind by the believing view of a free and perfect saviour.

I freely declare, that I find something more than a bare belief of particular redemption necessary to pacify my conscience; I mean not something more than the thing reported, even the righteousness and redemption of Christ: for I must have a conviction in my own conscience from the divine testimony, that the whole work of Christ is freely presented to sinners as such for their relief. The soul pacifying conviction of *this*, leading me to take my whole hope purely from thence, is saving faith; whereby I am brought into vital union to Christ, and begin to experience a work of grace in my soul, with which eternal life is connected. So far as I am at uncertainty about this free-
gracious;

gracious testimony, doubts as to my own state must prevail : for it is impossible I should perceive or experience any true work of grace in my soul, but as flowing from and supported by the influence of the gospel : And how an awakened conscience can be truly pacified but by a real persuasion of this freeness of divine grace, is too difficult for me to conceive.

A terrifying apprehension of guilt and peace of conscience, are certainly such contraries, that they cannot exist in the same soul at the same time ; but in proportion as the one prevails, the other subsides. Nothing can properly discharge the conscience from guilt or pacify it, but a sense of pardon, through a belief that there is free forgiveness with God ; and where that is obtained, the conscience is purged from guilt and no where else.

If my friends know no other peace of conscience than what they derive from a reflection upon past experiences and evidences, I am sorry they have learned to reject the enjoyment of such a divine pleasure, as I with my own soul always warm'd by; even the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and his compleat redemption, as appearing open in the gospel for my only hope, righteousness and strength, upon the footing of that same freeness of grace which reaches the case of every sinner as well as my own. And should be glad, if they would consider what they are pursuing, for their peace and hope towards God ; while those whom they oppose, believe and love the doctrine of free redemption, receiving their satisfaction entirely, only and immediately from thence ; and are peculiarly thankful for the evidence given them in the free gospel for that blessed truth, which affords immediate relief to the guilty conscience before God, and who under a sense hereof are constrained to trust, love and obey the Lord Jesus Christ,

And now, I leave every one upon drawing the comparison fairly between these two methods of pacifying the conscience, to judge for himself, Which of them is most scriptural, Which affords the sweetest and best relief to the soul, Which tends most to draw us off from all dependence upon any thing wrought in us or done

by us, Which fixes the soul most *properly* upon Christ alone, Which leads us most to love the divine word, Which lays the best foundation for gospel-comfort and holiness, and Which does the most honour to the divine spirit as taking of the things of Christ, and breathing upon our souls from the scriptures of truth.

Our author proceeds p. 14, 15. to insinuate as if Mr. S——n denied, That a believer may make use of his experience to form a judgment of his own state; That a believer may be conscious of such a change of heart and life, as distinguishes *his* state from another's; That a believer may be sensible of, and may, yea ought to be thankful for distinguishing grace; and p. 16. 17. That whatever joys believers might have at first from the gospel-report, yet they may have afterwards an additional joy arising from a persuasion of their personal interest in the great blessings of the covenant, by a personal experience of the work of grace on their souls, and the genuine fruits of such a work. These, our author would insinuate, are truths that need to be defended against the opposition made to them by Mr. S——n. But none of these particulars are denied either by him or by me; supposing we have the same idea of the nature of this work of grace and its genuine fruits. Mr. S——n's account of this may be seen briefly express'd in the *letters on Theron*, p. 416. Where he says, "The assurance of faith arises from the evidence carried in the divine testimony to the consciences of the ungodly; the assurance of hope arises from experience in the hearts of them that love God and keep his commandments." To every one that attentively reads the *letters on Theron*, these things will evidently appear to be not only admitted, but explained at large in p. 414—417. and p. 425—430. where he most expressly censures Mr. *Hervey*, for denying that persons may prove their title to comfort by genuine marks of conversion; yea and charges it with approaching near to ridiculing the work of the holy ghost as a comforter. And if persons will be so faithful in this case, as to peruse these parts of his performance, they will see this whole matter stated in an evangelical light.

Our author p. 17. of the reflections, reasons in a very extraordinary and unjust manner, upon Mr. S---'s saying, that the joy arising immediately from faith, does not *at first* proceed on any persuasion that I am a justified person, or that there is any difference betwixt me and others; as if it was to be inferred from hence, that he must not *afterwards* know any thing of his justification and sanctification, lest he should come under the odious character of a pharisee. This way of inferring is so palpably weak and injurious, that it deserves no reply.

But to prove that this his conclusion is just, our author next quotes from p. 82. of the correspondence, the following words. "A person by being brought to the knowledge of the truth, is not thereby led to think himself posselt of some good principle, by which he stands more nearly related to God than he was, or than other men. His comfort does not lie in thinking on any thing about himself, or any change he has undergone; but he is comforted in thinking on what is without him, &c." Here our author's quotation stops; being as it were afraid lest he should prevent himself from drawing the injurious conclusion, of making Mr. S----- assert, that a believer is in reality no nearer to God than others, either as to a change of state or heart. But Mr. S-----'s next words are, "and in this very thing consists any good change he has undergone." And all that follows in that place of the correspondence, is intended to show the nature of this change; which indeed is a very great and supernatural one. 'Tis this, that he who before was disposed to seek his rest and hope, by discerning something in himself; is now taught by the influence of the gospel, to receive his hope and comfort only and directly from Christ revealed. And it is certain, that such an important change made in the thoughts of the heart, produces a disposition entirely new; which is in scripture called a new heart and a new spirit.

However upon the footing of this gross mistake of our author, he goes on p. 18—24 industriously to prove what was never denied either by Mr. S----- or by me,

or by any other professor of christianity I ever heard of, namely, That believers are nearer to God than others, in relation, conformity and enjoyment; That believers have been favour'd in all ages with the knowledge of their relation to God; That believers may conclude their spiritual relation to God, from the operation of his grace upon their souls; and that the divine spirit witnesses with their spirit to their adoption.

All this train of argument then must be esteem'd very impertinent, and so it needs no reply.

However, it is equally evident that all these subjects may be conceived of in a pharisaical and self-righteous way, and handled in such a manner as to cloud or contradict the proper freeness of divine grace reveal'd; for which reason it is necessary they should be stated according to the truth and spirit of the gospel. This Mr. S——n has done in the pages of the *Letters on Theron*, quoted above; and in the *Eighth Letter* of the correspondence, p. 82—95.

Page 24th of these reflections, our author proceeds to consider Mr. S——n's sentiments of *inherent grace*. But here I need say but little, having dwelt distinctly upon this subject in the foregoing letters; and all that is here said from p. 24—28 has received a sufficient answer; excepting one turn of thought in a way of reasoning, and a few texts of scripture aiming to prove the existence and necessity of some inherent principle of grace, distinct from the efficacy of the gospel by the spirit.

Page 25. He reasons thus, "As a man naturally dead has no perception of objects, how great so ever be their lustre; so a man spiritually dead, as all are by nature, has no perception of the spiritual glories of the gospel, how bright so ever they shine forth in the word of God. The distemper'd organ must first be rectified, before the light can make the most splendid object visible." It is freely acknowledged, that we are all by nature spiritually dead and blind. But the question is, how we are raised from spiritual death, and how we are cured of our spiritual blindness; whether this be done by some physical operation of the divine spirit, separate from the word and previous to its

its efficacy upon the soul by the spirit ? Now as to our being raised from spiritual *death*, the scripture is very express and clear : For we are said to receive spiritual life by hearing and believing. *John v. 24.* where Christ asserts this truth with the greatest and sweetest solemnity, Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and is passed from death to life. Describing exactly the manner in which this most important change is wrought. This is farther confirmed and explained in the next verse with the same solemnity. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the *dead* shall hear the voice of the son of God ; and they that hear shall live.

The scripture is equally clear as to the manner in which we are brought from *darkness* to light. Our reason indeed, is apt in these subjects, to forget that we are speaking of the human *mind* and not of the human *body* ; and accordingly we are led to talk of a distemper'd organ in such a gross manner, as if the human understanding was material or corporeal ; and therefore that there must be some *physical* power exerted to rectify it : But let us for once recollect, that we are now speaking of the human *understanding* ; the blindness of which consists properly in *ignorance* and *error* ; and here one may appeal to common sense, whether supposing ignorance and error be removed, the understanding is not actually enlightened. And how can these be removed from our minds but by the light and truth of the gospel ? Or can the dispelling of darkness from the mind be considered as a distinct thing previous to the giving light ? If we conceive it not done purely by the gospel through the spirit, our thoughts are run into some *enthusiastical* or *physical* conceptions, about spiritual and evangelical subjects.

But let us see how the scripture describes our natural blindness and accounts for its cure. *Eph. iv. 18.* Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, thro' the *ignorance* which is in them ; thro' the blindness of their Heart. And we are told in what way 'tis cured *v. 20, 21.* But ye have not so learned Christ ; if so be that ye have heard him and
been

been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus. See *Luke: wise 2 Cor. iv, 2—6.*

The passages our author brings to prove his point, will I think, for the most part be found most expressly to prove the contrary.

Psal. cx. 3. Thy people shall be *willing* in the day of thy power. This text is far from proving the necessity of any *distinct* operation upon the *will*, besides that which is produced by the efficacy of the gospel upon the understanding and conscience: For it is an evident prophesy of the effect which the gospel should have upon all the powers and faculties of the soul; which prophesy was remarkably fulfill'd in the first promulgation of it, as recorded in the Acts of the apostles. Besides, let any one who knows the nature and has felt the power of the gospel by the spirit, only examine whether he did not find sufficient in the testimony thereof when received into the conscience by the spirit, to give a turn to *all* the powers of his soul. Or whether his experience can furnish him with an instance of the powers of his soul being turned to God, by any other influence.

Col. ii. 11, 12. Buried with Christ in baptism, where in also ye are risen with him, thro' the faith of the operation of God. This text indeed proves, that the important change is made by the power of God, which affects and turns the whole soul. But if we ask how this power is exerted, or in what way this spiritual resurrection is produced, the text informs us expressly, that it is thro' the *faith* of the operation of God. This passage then is an evident proof that 'tis the *faith* of the gospel which quickens us to spiritual life, being made effectual hereto by the power of God.

Heb. viii. 10: x. 16. I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts. This text is so far from proving any spiritual principle in us distinct from the *divine words*, that it does in the most express manner declare, that our regeneration is perform'd by the writing or implanting it in our minds and hearts. And from hence we may easily gather that this is the *law* in a believer's mind, mentioned *Rom. vi, 23.* which opposes the law in his members.

1 *John* iii, 9. His seed remaineth in him. And the apostle *Peter* tells us, that this seed is the word of the gospel. 1 *Pet.* i. 25.

As for *John* iv, 14. which speaks of a well of water within us ; this has been considered. p. 14.

Ezek. xi, 19. I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you, &c. That this means no other than the genuine effect of the gospel in the heart and conscience by the spirit, will evidently appear to every one who recollects that we are told how this blessed promise was evidently fulfilled, *Acts* iv. 32, where it is said, The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.

In a word, I cannot but plainly see, that the more I am called upon to consider texts of scripture as brought to describe the nature of an abiding principle of grace in the soul ; the more evident it appears, that the scriptures constantly affirm and confirm this sentiment ; which reflects such an honour both upon the glorious gospel and the blessed spirit, that the *divine word ingrafted*, is the principle of grace.

I find but one passage more offered to my consideration, namely *Luke* viii. 15. which mentions those who in an honest and good heart heard the word, kept it. If this text intimates any thing to our author's purpose, it must suppose that a person has an honest and good heart, well fitted and disposed *before* hearing of the word, to receive, relish and improve it aright ; a good disposition previous to faith in Christ or the knowledge of him. This sentiment is surely very disagreeable to Calvinism. But it will suit the taste of the self righteous world extremely well. In order then to restore this text to a consistency with established orthodoxy, 'tis necessary to remark : that this whole parable of the sower and his seed, is evidently intended to show the different reception the gospel of Christ would meet with, and the different effects it would have on different persons, when published by Christ and his apostles. And I think we may safely apprehend, without any over-stretch of charity, that the gospel would find some that were true believers *before*, upon the footing of old testament promises, such

as Simeon and Nathaniel were; who had good and honest hearts, or were true believers, before ever the gospel as proclaiming a saviour come, had reached their ears.

Let us therefore never forget that the scriptures know no principle of grace in the heart previous to, or distinct from the implanted word, whereby Christ who is the substance of the word, dwells in our hearts *by faith*. Eph. iii. 17.

This sentiment may teach us the more to value the glorious gospel which is the power of God to salvation; and to adore the divine spirit who indited it at first and who alone writes it upon the heart. This sentiment may likewise be a blessed mean to preserve us from *enthusiasm* of every sort; from *presumption* in speaking peace to ourselves; by considerations not warranted in the word; and from *self confidence* by looking into ourselves for our comfort: and may make us see that every degree of our hope directly and absolutely depends upon what we know of Christ as therein revealed.

I cannot help introducing in this place a nervous sentiment found in the late valuable Mr. T. Bradbury's *mystery of godliness*, at the beginning of sermon 14th "Religion, says he, is nothing else but the discovery that God has made of himself, a revelation that's given out from him. Take religion as a *doctrine*, and it is this revelation exposed; take it as a *principle* and it is this revelation implanted, filling the mind, possessing the will, and moving the affections; take it as a *practice*, and it is this revelation drawn out and returned in duty and love."

I find nothing more to be particularly remarked upon in these reflections, of a sentimental nature; except what is in page 28, 29, connected with a sentence in p. 24. where a *minister* is represented, as if upon this plan he was not or could not be faithful to God or his people; as it is supposed he must endeavour to deprive them of the comfort arising from the knowledge of God's distinguishing favours to them. p. 24. And again p. 28. 29. the same insinuation and complaint

plaint is suggested and enlarged upon in the following words.

“ Gospel ministers have a very extensive work appointed them : One part whereof, is to promote the comfort of God’s people *as such*, to whom many great and precious promises are made ; which they can’t have the comfort of while destitute of the experience of such a gracious work of God in them, whereby he has distinguish’d them from others ; who under the ministry of the gospel, have nothing more than the bare belief of the bare report. Nor do I see how a minister can assist his people to make a comfortable use of the doctrines of election and perseverance upon this new plan ; tho’ he may believe them as revealed truths.” I do not suppose that our author here intends to intimate (tho’ his expression looks that way) that God’s people are really destitute of the experience of the work of God in them ; if they are, what minister can hold forth comfort to them, unless by presenting to view a compleat free saviour for their immediate encouragement. But if they do experience it, I am certain if it be of the true kind, it is nothing else but an experience of the efficacy of the free gospel on their souls, comforting, quickening, exciting and strengthening them : Therefore the preaching of this gospel, or determining to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified, can by no means tend to damp, but on the contrary, to promote those happy experiences. But it is still objected, that this doctrine will not give us any satisfaction arising from the consideration of distinguishing grace, as appearing either in election, regeneration or perseverance. To this I must reply, that I firmly believe and very frequently preach, that when a believer under a sense of his own emptiness, helplessness and unworthiness before God, is favoured with clear views of the infinite riches and absolute freeness of the grace revealed in Jesus Christ, he thereby becomes *conscious* that Christ alone is *his* light, life, strength, joy and portion ; and that as he goes on loving and obeying the truth, he has the testimony of his own conscience confirm’d by the witness and seal of the spirit ; and that in these happy circumstances, he is

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called upon to bless God for distinguishing grace. Now the doctrines of election, particular redemption, and of the saints perseverance, appear very confirming and comfortable; yea, and all the promises made to believers as those that know, love and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, have a particular direction to *them*. And what more they want to have declared to them for their confirmation and consolation, I cannot imagine; unless it be to have comfort administered to them, when the evidences of the genuine effects of the gospel do not appear upon them or in them.

But if through the prevalency of temptation, unbelief or corruption, their consciences are afresh loaded with guilt, their evidences disappear or are clouded, &c. I know of nothing that will or can truly or effectually relieve them, but a fresh view of the blood of Christ as flowing freely to sinners: Neither is there any thing that will clear up their evidences, without their being brought, by an impressive sense of the all-sufficiency and freeness of divine grace in Christ, to that obedience of faith, and those exercises of heart, which evidence themselves to the conscience; to which the conditional promises are made, and to which the holy spirit sets his seal as the comforter.

HAVING thus finished my remarks upon these reflections, I would now lay aside all the air of controversy, and draw to a close by addressing my self with all the seriousness and faithfulness I can, to every man's conscience in the sight of God; without pointing at any particular persons, but expressing my self in such a manner, as may suit the case of all professors in general.

It must be own'd, that no question has ever been moved of greater consequence to our peace and comfort than this, *How shall a professor come to a true satisfaction about his state towards God?* Or, how shall he be ascertain'd as to his interest in the blessings of the covenant, and the eternal safety of his precious soul? The scriptures give us this direct answer, *By believing and obeying the gospel.* But as this answer is too little understood, I would therefore expatiate upon it with freedom in a serious manner.

We know that we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ : That as soon as ever the king of terrors has given the mortal stroke, our souls must launch out into an unknown eternity, and must be landed in a state of everlasting happiness or misery. Yea, our own consciences sometimes place us before hand in the presence of God the judge of all. And a time will *speedily* come, when we shall be approaching to the borders of eternity. If conscience be now awake, the question presses upon the mind with the greatest importunity ; " O how can I be satisfied as to the concerns of my immortal soul ? " If christians in general were but thus brought solemnly to realize these important matters, they would presently apprehend in their very hearts, that nothing less than a foundation entirely *safe*, and an hope absolutely *sure*, would serve their purpose. But where is that to be found which is sufficient to support the soul and conscience in the agonies of death, and the prospect of an eternal state ? Where is that which will give satisfying relief to the conscience, and a clear confidence before God ? I know you will immediately say, *In Jesus Christ alone*. But do not your thoughts still leave room for such questions as these ? " How shall I come at Christ, or how shall I be assured of my interest in him : What shall or what must I do to obtain it, or what must I experience or practice in order to gain satisfaction." Here come in abundance of perplexing queries, and a scene of important difficulties not easy to be solved. So that you are almost as much at a loss about your everlasting state, as if you had heard nothing of Christ and his work for sinners : This important question then still returns unanswered.

To solve it to our satisfaction, we set about to examine our own hearts and ways, our past conduct or past experiences ; in hopes of finding something there, which may be a means of allaying our fears and easing our consciences. Now we look with eagerness and solicitude into every corner of our hearts, to see whether in the midst of all the *bad* we find there, we cannot find something *good* wrought in us, or something truly gracious in our experiences, that should be a proper satisfying

fying proof of our special interest : All which pains are taken chiefly with this view, to obtain ease to our minds and consciences. Upon enquiry, we perhaps discern some probable evidences in our favour, or think we have felt some distinguishing experiences ; and thus obtain ease and relief. But, what if it should appear after all, that these evidences are attended with *uncertainty*, or that there is some reason to suspect they may be delusive ? How then can the mind be eased, or the conscience pacified upon *this* plan ? And let us here seriously reflect, that while we are thus anxiously employ'd to get rest to our souls, we are now under a strong bias to think the best and make the best of what we find and feel. How then can we know, but that under the influence of such a propensity, we may actually put a cheat upon our selves, thro' a fond desire to apprehend that our state is at bottom safe and good ? And what if our deceitful hearts should operate in this case, to bring us into a delusion ; where are we then ? And who can answer for his own heart, so as to assure himself that he is under no fundamental mistake ? I know that these thoughts at first view seem to take away all use for marks and signs. But they do not, as we shall soon see. However that be, no one I think, can deny or evade the force of these observations, how searching or discouraging soever they may seem to be. But there are some further thoughts equally alarming, which must not be omitted. Have not many made a shining profession, and to their own and others apprehension, been favoured with the most distinguishing experiences, who yet have turned out hypocrites and apostates ? Have not many talked high things about the witness, seal and earnest of the spirit, as enjoyed by themselves ; and yet have been in the event found liars ? Again, are there not counterfeit graces, comforts and experiences ? Can these things be denied ? Upon this plan for obtaining peace, we must therefore distinguish, divide and subdivide *very nicely*, before we can be supposed to arrive at any degree of certainty, by distinguishing what is genuine from what is counterfeit ; and after all, most probably the matter must remain in doubtful sad suspense. How then can we have any solid peace ?

Again,

Again, perhaps we are in such circumstances as to the distress of our souls, or as to approaching death, that a *speedy answer must be given*, or the soul sinks under its load, and runs almost into desperation. Many inexpressible struggles are produced in the soul, and that, perhaps, when there is neither time nor capacity to examine the matter sufficiently. And yet in the midst of these unhappy circumstances, if a person discerns the infinite importance of his soul affairs, he sees that nothing short of a *certainly* upon which he may immediately rest, will afford him satisfaction.

But does the divine word leave us in such a perplexity as this? If it does, where is our hope, our rest, our confidence?

Must not christianity be upon this plan a very uncomfortable thing; a very uncertain scheme for hope and peace toward God? And does it not in this way, actually leave us; yea and *oblige* us, to take the chief of our hope and comfort directly from what we may be supposed to have felt or done? But *behold*, in the midst of all these inextricable perplexities, the gospel proclaims the Lord Jesus Christ and all his salvation, open and free for the sure relief and hope of the distressed, miserable soul. If this be discern'd in its beauty and importance, how necessary, how valuable, encouraging and attracting, must the hope of the gospel appear! Now while every thing else proves uncertain, this is certain; when every other refuge and support fail, this appears sufficiently firm and free: 'Tis found a safe retreat, a sure foundation, a sufficient stay; detached from every other thought and consideration.

But perhaps your anxious minds will here object. "How can I be satisfied without an assurance of my own *special* interest in Christ; which 'tis plain, this general declaration of the gospel cannot afford me, because it bears an even aspect to *all* sinners as such?" But I would ask again, What kind of assurance do you want? Do you want immediately to be so fully certified of your everlasting welfare as shall set you at rest from all fear; that shall determine your state whether you love and obey Christ or no? Methinks, what you want is, to be able to say, *my moun-*

tain stands strong and I shall never be moved. Do you want such assurance as shall allow you to think yourself safe, in any other way than a constant, immediate, absolute dependence upon God in Christ for all you want and expect, and so trusting, loving and obeying him accordingly? If so, get this assurance of interest and safety where you can: The word of God does not give it you, because it does not assert directly concerning any individual now living, that he shall certainly be saved: Neither can you obtain it by any *positive* certainty arising from duties or experiences, since the heart is always deceitful. But see here in the gospel such a certainty afforded, as brings the soul into a state of immediate dependence upon God, and cleaving to him alone; assuring us that in resting on him we are safe, and no where else: That while we in our hearts esteem God in Christ as our own only hope and portion, our everlasting interests are secure, not merely in the purpose of God and according to the everlasting covenant, but likewise according to the open promise of the gospel. Yea, we are assured, that in knowing and obeying the gospel, the spirit witnesses with our spirit, that we may enjoy everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.

The scriptures most comfortably declare the gospel to be of such a nature, that whosoever believes it shall be saved; while it avers with equal solemnity, that he who believeth not shall be damned. So that our greatest concern lies here; lest our faith should not be the faith of God's elect; lest our hope should not be the hope of the gospel; and lest our obedience should not be the obedience of faith. And whether our faith, hope and obedience be of the right kind, can only be known by its being produced, supported or influenced by the gospel. Let us then look a little closely into this matter. Every person, except one that is in despair, has some hope; and that hope of his is supported by some thoughts or *sentiments* in his mind and heart. Now, I say, that if the sentiment which gives a person his peace of conscience, be any thing opposite to or separate from the gospel, as proclaiming a free and perfect saviour, he does not believe it; but he has or desires

desires a satisfaction which the gospel does not administer. Perhaps it is an *enthusiastic* satisfaction, form'd upon a persuasion or appropriation wrought by some spirit, which speaks to him more than or aside from what the gospel properly understood, will warrant. Or perhaps his satisfaction is *Antinomian*; such as affords him reason to fear sin less than otherwise he might see a necessity for, if he had not this hope. Whereas, we must always take it for granted, if we can dare to sin, or can dare to neglect our duty, under an apprehension of the safety of our state, however obtained or however proved; that we do not now understand the true grace of God; for that makes all who understand it to know and feel, that it teaches them to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, &c. The satisfaction which the gospel affords is such, that a person cannot indulge sin, without losing that satisfaction; because in so doing, his heart says, that not *Christ*, but *self* and *sense* are his hope and portion. Or perhaps a person's peace may be *pharisaical* or self righteous in some shape or other; supported by some species of self confidence. Saying in his heart, "I cannot be contented with a
"saviour, freely and openly proclaimed; I do not
"like to be set upon a level with the vilest of sinners,
"and to receive my hope and comfort upon the same
"plan that such must. I will not stand upon the same
"footing with them." Or else he will say, "I have
"or I must have something distinguishing in me, some
"mark or sign, or I will not, I dare not believe and
"rest upon Christ."

But after all, you may say, "How can I be satisfied, unless I am conscious that I believe *truly* and
"sincerely; since the scriptures say, *he that believeth*
"*not shall be damned*? Must not I then by examination and proof have it appear to my conscience, that
"I am a true believer, before I can have any well
"grounded satisfaction?"

This I find to be the grand objection, frequently made and urged against the present view of the gospel: and since it may be considered as a case of conscience, by which many are perplexed in their souls; as well as a sentimental objection, whereby many may be stumbled

bled: I shall therefore take the more particular notice of it in the following observations,

1. If we attend to common sense and constant experience as to the nature, manner and proof of *believing*, or *seeing*; we shall find, that these things are of such a nature; that they entirely resolve themselves into their objects, so far as experience is concerned therein. A person is no farther conscious that he *sees* an object, than as the object seen does some way affect him: Neither is a person any way properly conscious that he *believes* a proposition of importance, any farther than, what he believes impresses him. When we behold an object in common cases, our minds are not imployed in thinking about the manner of our seeing or the motion of light; but are only led to attend to the object seen; And so in believing, we are not thinking about any exercises of our own minds therein; but only about the sentiment believed. So that a person comes to know that he sees or believes; not by reflection upon or examination into any thing in himself; but by finding or experiencing, that what he sees or believes affects his mind. Thus there is produced a sort of experimental union between him that sees or believes, and what is seen or believed by him: So that he is affected with pleasure or pain, according to the light in which the thing appears, that is seen, heard or believed. Now let us apply this plain thought to the report of the gospel.

2. The doctrine of free grace in Jesus Christ to sinners as such proclaimed in the word, is in itself most joyful, comfortable, encouraging and soul pacifying news: Therefore we cannot know that we believe it, but by feeling or becoming conscious, that we are comforted, encouraged or pacified thereby. Accordingly the first effect of this belief must be peace of conscience before God thro' the blood of Christ, and some sense of the divine favour thro' the righteousness of Christ proclaimed as free in the gospel. This must be, more or less, the necessary consequence; unless there remain in the mind some ignorance, doubt or mistake about the gospel itself; or unless the mind be drawn off to something else distinct from it, or opposite to it; whereby the efficacy of the truth proclaimed, may be enervated or under-

undermined. When this appears to be the case, nothing can be more suited to remove any impediment in the way of its efficacy, than the declaring, explaining, proving or vindicating the truth, with its importance. If this method be rendered effectual by the spirit of God, who alone can do it; then the mistake is rectified, the mind enlightened, and the doubt solved: whereupon the person is encouraged and comforted by the blessed word, whereon he is caused to hope.

3. Though what the person now sees and believes, be in itself a *general* truth, openly proclaimed; yet the effect produced in the believing it, is a *peculiar* experience of spiritual peace, rest and refreshment. So that while others may be supposed to remain strangers to it, or to disbelieve it, or to be under some mistake about it; he that believes it according as it is declared in the word, becomes possessed of a distinguishing experience, whereby he differs from what he was before, and from what many others are.

4. This distinguishing experience is of such a nature, that it contains or produces more or less an *experimental* consciousness of an interest in, and enjoyment of the blessings comprehended in the declaration of free grace.

For when a person sees the son and believeth on him, as freely exhibited; he therein and thereby becomes conscious, that what he sees in Christ becomes *his* light; that Christ in whom he believes, becomes *his* hope; that his soul is supported *by that* on which he trusts and leans; and that he is quickened and attracted by that glorious gospel which he believes and loves. This is the way in which all spiritual blessings come to be experienced and enjoyed by us. In this way we may arrive at all the satisfaction and support we can desire in our present state; for here we are to live *by faith*. And it is in vain and unsafe for us to desire or seek after any other knowledge of special interest, than what arises out of, and is accompanied with this sense and experience of a vital union and connection between our souls and Christ in a way of believing. Christ is brought so exceedingly near to us in the gospel

pel of grace, that he is no sooner seen and known as there exhibited, but this peace and hope must arise to the soul more or less; otherwise, neither Christ nor the gospel, nor the divine grace as revealed, can be said to be *quite free*.

5. If a person does not become conscious in some degree, of peace, satisfaction and support, *purely* from what he perceives and believes standing forth in the free declaration of grace; he does not understand, or does not credit the gospel; for therein is exhibited to us *freely* all our salvation.

The truth of our faith can be proved only by this: That the truth itself, or which is the same, the blood and righteousness of Christ freely revealed, does first pacify the conscience before God, and then working by love, has a purifying effect upon our souls. If this kind of peace does not enter the mind, thro' the revelation of grace; a person will still be seeking after spiritual comfort and support separate from it or opposite to it: So that his heart despises or his thoughts evade the true gospel; and he is accordingly in real dangers, and under some awful delusion. Where the gospel is not discerned by any person in its proper freeness, and its primitive glory; the objection now under consideration will return and continue upon his mind; and his defective or mistaken view of the gospel will still leave him under the influence of the spirit of self dependence; as he will see no other way of obtaining or enjoying peace, but by a reflection upon something found in him or experienced by him. Thus it appears, that the whole force of this objection proceeds at the bottom from a disbelief of the proper immediate freeness of divine grace revealed in the gospel. For either a person *does* believe it, or he *does not*: If he *does*, he is in some measure pacified, comforted and attracted thereby: If he *does not*; then he cannot see how he can have any proper peace to his mind, but by reflection upon himself; and accordingly seeks after or rests upon some false dangerous prop! This he is to be warn'd against, by being reminded, that he who believes not shall be damned.

While Jesus Christ is proclaimed as a foundation stone; that whosoever believeth shall not make haste,

one in confusion; it is likewise to be added, that the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies; and such a refuge every thing is, besides the redeemer himself. *Isa-xxviii. 16, 17.*

6 All the scripture exhortations and promises to believing, conspire to support this view of our subject, if they are rightly understood. These gracious exhortations and promises of the word, may be briefly expressed thus, *believe and live; look and be saved; trust and be safe; come and find rest.* Now all these declarations have evidently a most encouraging and conscience pacifying meaning in them; for they plainly suggest to an enlightened understanding, such a refreshing hint, as carries the mind at once beyond its own exercises to the glorious, gracious object presented. A person apprehending the true meaning of such expressions, is not stopped in, or perplexed about the *acts* mentioned; but seeing that by these calls and promises, salvation in Jesus Christ is freely presented; this sense of the divine freeness plainly suggested, becomes the *life*, the *strength*, and the hope of the soul, in all its actings towards God in Christ.

I could dwell upon this subject with abundance of pleasure, and illustrate it by various similies. But to be brief, let us take only one of these phrases into present consideration. *Come to me*, says Christ, *and I will give you rest.* Now one that is entangled with some legal thought, will immediately fix upon the act of *coming*; desiring to know *how* to perform this act aright, or to see whether he has performed it or no; thinking that he can have no peace nor rest, but on the consideration of the right performance thereof. Whereas one that is taught the proper freeness of divine grace, as thus exhibited, will fix his eye directly upon the word *me*. “Does Jesus Christ say, *come to me* and I will give you rest? Surely this is enough to encourage and attract my soul; I need nothing more for my hope, than to be assured of such a *free welcome*.” With this thought his conscience is pacified, and the motion of his soul towards Christ, being, as I may say, excited by and filled with a sense of this divine free love, he comes and finds rest. We may suppose one
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deep in debt and ready to be arrested, to be addressed thus, "Go to such an one, he is able and ready to pay your whole debt." Would not this testimony itself set his mind at rest directly? Yes, surely; and his act of going, would not be at all considered as previously necessary to the ease of his mind, but would be found to flow from it.

By these plain thoughts, I would hope, through the the blessing of the spirit of grace, you may be led to see how much *unbelief* and *legality* must lie at the bottom of such a frame of spirit, as makes a person *endeavour* to perform a certain act, in order to obtain peace to his mind, or to examine whether he has performed it aright, in order to have peace from that consideration. For this is certainly a denial of the freeness of grace as revealed, and turns the gospel into a new law, for peace and hope towards God: Yea, it seems evidently to proceed from some spirit of self dependence, which will not permit a person to believe the immediate freeness of divine grace, or to be satisfied by it, or to rest in it, for want of discerning some previous change in himself for the better.

But some may here reply with an anxious concern, "Are not there some who are true believers, who yet are not *clearly* satisfied of the safety of their state in Christ." I readily answer, yes, there are; for the least degree of true faith is connected with salvation. Yet, as none can come to a *clear* satisfaction about themselves, but in this way of believing; therefore I cannot consistently and safely take any other method of promoting the comfort of such, but by presenting before them a free and compleat saviour, to be rested upon and rejoiced in: And if a person cannot receive comfort through such a gospel declaration, 'tis both unsafe and in vain for him to seek it any other way, in such circumstances. But if through the operation of the blessed spirit by means of this gospel, his hope and comfort is promoted, the more he advances in hope and love this way, the more clearly he will be able to say with the apostle, *2 Tim. i. 12.* I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep, &c. While he perceives this aliusufficiency of

of Christ's free Grace, the satisfaction of his soul is maintained by it, and he is more or less persuaded of the safety of what he has committed into Christ's hands. Here then lies the center, the spring, the strength of all that hope which is necessary to support and comfort our hearts.

Should any ask again, "But is there no hope to be obtained farther than that which is exhibited in the gospel to all? Can there be no room for thankfulness for *distinguishing* grace?" I answer, that unless we have this *first* hope for our main support, and strength *continually*, 'tis quite impossible that any distinguishing experience should ever be produced and maintained; or that any true evidences should appear. For if this be not the life and strength of his soul; namely a free revealed Christ, he has reason to suspect all his duties, evidences, and experiences as legal. But if a person be comforted and quickened; if he be encouraged to trust, and constrain'd to love Christ hereby; he may well find reason to be abundantly thankful for *distinguishing* grace, crying out with holy admiration and gratitude; How is it, that thou wilt manifest thyself to *us*, and not unto the world! *John. xiv. 22.* Yea, while he is under this blessed influence of the gospel by the spirit, he is taught to say with the apostle; The life I live in the flesh is by the faith of the son of God; who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*. *Gal. ii. 20.* In this manner a believer makes use of his experiences to judge of his state; and such experiences as these with their genuine fruits, are indeed, the surest marks of our election. *1 Thess. i. 4, 5.*

But instead of all this, we must be now taught that our consciences cannot be pacified by the blood of Christ immediately, as flowing freely to sinners; nor be truly comforted thereby. But on the contrary, almost the whole stress must be laid upon our discerning some previous gracious work; which must be made out to be saving, by the duty of self-examination. Accordingly, this duty is most commonly explained, in forced and performed with this view. As to that exhortation, *2 Cor. 13. 5.* Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; Prove your own selves: What

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know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? Nothing can be more evident to one who reads it with attention, and views it in its connection, than that the design of it is to intimate thus much: If any thing appears in the temper or conduct of a professor, which is disagreeable to the gospel; he ought to take occasion from hence to suspect, whether he be in the faith: while this very text plainly suggests by the surprize couched under these words, *What know ye not your own selves?* that if our experiences are of the right stamp, they will evidence themselves.—'Tis by *faith* that Christ dwells in the heart; and faith or believing is of such a nature, that it does more or less evidence itself to our consciences: and to confirm this witness of our own spirits, we may be sure, that the divine spirit will not be behind hand in joining his testimony, as we proceed loving and obeying the gospel we believe. So that there is no occasion for a laborious search, followed by a train of reasoning, to obtain peace and comfort. We need not be so suspicious of the hope of the gospel, or the faithfulness of the spirit as a comforter. We may well leave this part to God; since he has proclaimed enough in the free gospel to afford us sufficient relief, and has promised, that those who know, love and obey him, shall not be forsaken by him. I remember the psalmist once in a disconsolate frame, was for calling to remembrance his song in the night, to obtain comfort, *Psalms 77*. But he was unsuccessful in pursuing this method, and at length obtain'd comfort, by remembering the years of the right hand of the most high; by which he meant, not his own past experiences, but the wonders God had formerly wrought for his people, by *Moses* and *Aaron*: If then we would follow his example, we are to call to mind the accepted time and the day of salvation, when Christ arose from the dead, as having obtained compleat salvation for them that believe.

I know you will here be ready to say, "Are all our past experiences then to be forgotten, or not improved as evidences and encouragements?" I answer, far be it; for though they are not to be used for
pacify-

pacifying our consciences, &c. yet they are to be remembered, as confirmations of *the faith* to our minds; since if they are genuine, they are so many proofs of the truth and power of the gospel; and likewise to make it more fully appear, that *we are in the faith*; as also to encourage a farther dependence upon the same free grace and love, which was at the root of all those former gracious experiences. According to what the psalmist says *Psal. lxiii. 7*: Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

Notwithstanding this, I will venture to say, that professors cannot well be too suspicious of themselves, as to any experiences they have felt, or any duties they have performed. The scriptures are full of exhortations to *watchfulness, jealousy, caution, and self-examination*; always taking it for granted, that joy and peace come into the mind in believing and loving the testimony of God's grace in Christ. Such suspicion cannot do us any real damage; for if in the midst of all our jealousies, the *free-grace truth* in its glory and beauty appears to our view; *that* will prove an anchor to our hope, and an incentive to our love; even when we can find nothing about us, but what would tend to discourage and sink us. And it will be found that the comfort flowing thus into our souls from the gospel by the spirit, as a contrast to the effects of our own self jealousy; will be much more safe, solid, satisfying and truly sanctifying, than what we think to obtain any other way.

Though these thoughts look as if they were intended to make believers always question their state; yet it will be found far otherwise: because they serve only to drive and keep them close to that foundation, which alone is secure, and where they will find rest. But however, in a case of so great importance, there is no room for flattery or compliment. Either you *do*, or do *not* question your state: If you *do*, there is no other way, as I know of, to obtain satisfaction, but by believing on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ directly as standing forth to view in the gospel: For it is in this way, and thro' this medium, that God conveys to

his people a sense of his favour. If you do *not* question your state, but are well assured concerning it; then this assurance, if solid, will bear the trial: Neither need you be afraid to look into the worst of your case. But if a suspicion arising in the mind upon this, should shake your confidence; it then becomes evident, that so far it was not placed upon Christ, but upon some good opinion you had formed concerning yourselves.

I shall therefore conclude the whole, with one indubitable maxim, which it becomes all christians constantly to retain; 'tis this. An *uncertain* foundation is an *unsafe* foundation. However then christians are of the number of the elect, redeemed and adopted; however they may or ought to be esteemed such, by themselves or others agreeable to their profession, practice, experience or denomination; and however it be their duty to be thankful for any experiences or comforts which they have felt; all which is readily allowed: Yet there is no *absolute* certainty to be gathered upon this plan; by reason of the deceitfulness of the heart and the like. From whence 'tis plain, that God never intended his people should take their rest herein; but that they should, in the midst of all their hopes and fears about their personal interest, be led, driven and kept to that hope and refuge that is in itself safe and sure. Nothing is more necessary than this, nor is there any thing that we are naturally more averse to. Some make the world their portion, others make criminal indulgencies their delight; and others make their own righteousness in some shape or other their confidence: And shall I add, that some are for placing it upon their experiences, and upon what they call the work of the spirit in their hearts; and upon *any* thing, rather than the freeness of gospel grace, which the work of the spirit is designed to lead us to.

But if we are led and taught by the holy spirit to rest directly upon Christ *alone*; then we have the anchor of our souls both sure and steadfast: Then the superstructure of gospel experience and obedience, built upon this foundation, will be good and solid; receiving all its solidity and firmness from its immediate connection with the foundation whereon it is built.

Neither

Neither can we attain to any steady hope concerning our own interest, but in working upon this plan, and resting upon this prop. If a person looks upon the hope held forth in the gospel to be only an uncertain conditional hope; apprehending he may not securely rest upon it, unless thro' the consciousness of something previously wrought in him or done by him; he is of course induced to seek after or look to something in himself, for the reason or immediate ground of his confidence before God: and while this sentiment prevails in his heart; every duty he performs is legalized, and every experience he may have felt is perverted, by being placed exactly in the room of a revealed Christ. But if on the contrary, the person sees that God's love in Christ as revealed in the free gospel, points directly towards him for his only foundation; then the more he is apprehensive of his own guilt and danger, the more he is obliged to trust in Christ and constrained to love him; and so the gospel hope becomes a spur to all cheerful obedience. The believer then does not take his comfort from his obedience; but taking it immediately from Christ, he enjoys comfort in the exercise of love and obedience. For every exercise of evangelical love, and every act of gospel-obedience has some comfort attending it: while every departure from Christ produces darkness and distress, unless the soul be deluded and deceived by some false comfort. Thus, upon the whole, it appears, that if the Lord the spirit, gives us right views of the full free grace held forth in the gospel, we shall be thereby kept at a distance from the *self-righteous* hope of the pharisee; the *licentious* hope of the *Antinomian*; the *self-sufficient* hope of the free willer; the *conditional* hope of the *Neonomian*; the *presumptuous* hope of him who is confident of his own interest without sufficient evidence for it; and shall be prevented from taking up with the *uncertain* hope of him who does, more or less, place his evidences or experiences in the room of Christ, for his immediate and chief reason of encouragement and confidence. Then we shall have joy and peace in believing, and abound in hope, yea and in holiness too, thro' the power of the holy ghost.

THE APPENDIX.

NOW since it has been much desired that I should state the difference between the foregoing view of the gospel, and that which stands more or less opposed to it ; I have therefore endeavour'd to draw the contrast in various particulars. Whereupon, I presently found *two* things very remarkable. *One* is, that that tho' my view of gospel-doctrine has been traduced as if it were merely *historical* or doctrinal ; yet after attempting at several methods of laying forth this difference, I could find no way of doing it, but that which is truly *experimental* and *practical*. The *other* is, that tho' the radical difference lies only in one *single* point ; yet that point appears to be of such a peculiar nature, that it necessarily spreads itself into the whole system of gospel *doctrine, practice* and *experience* : For which reason, it cannot be expected that I should be able distinctly to mention *all* the particulars. I have therefore contented my self with some that most readily occur'd ; and I conceive that the most familiar method of stating the contrast will be, by setting forth, What *were* the views and experiences of a person, *before* he saw the central truth in its native simplicity ; and what *become* his views and experiences *afterwards*. But I must here beg, that one remark may be carried thro' the whole. Namely, that it must not be thought that *every* person who is supposed not to have seen this truth in its beauty, should find his experience correspond with *every* particular, that is placed on that side of the contrast ; or that *every* person's experience who is supposed to know this truth, should fall in with the other side of the contrast, in *every* respect. I freely leave each person to judge for himself, how far his sentiments or experience appear to belong to either side. *To his own master he standeth or falleth*. However, to prevent confusion in language, 'tis all along exprest as if the *same* person had thus changed his views in *every* instance.

The CONTRAST STATED.

The grand central difference, from whence arise all the others, may be thus exprest.

He before thought, that there was a necessity for him to find some saving change or good disposition wrought in him, before he could have any peace in his conscience, or rest to his soul, from the perfect work of Christ presented in the gospel; and accordingly was distressed in his thoughts for want of perceiving it in himself; and therefore sought after it, and prayed for it, that he might obtain peace and hope towards God: And when he apprehended that he had found or obtain'd it, he laid the chief stress of his hope upon it. But now he finds relief to his conscience, not by discerning any favourable symptom about himself; but by understanding that the blood of Christ is alufficient and free, according to the divine testimony: and this evangelical peace and rest thus obtained, becomes the root and spring of all that love and obedience, which distinguishes a believer from others. And so he now rejoices in Christ alone, having no confidence in the flesh. *Phil. iii. 3.*

As to CONVICTIONS.

He before was under great concern, lest he had not been truly and sufficiently convinced of the evil of sin; Looking upon this as a necessary preparation for the grace of the gospel. But he now sees that all this concern before faith, only tended to discourage him, or else led him to make some excuse, or perform some duty, or to search for something good in himself, to ease his mind and alleviate his fear; and so he now finds that all his anxious thoughts were in fact pointed *against*, rather than preparatory to the free grace of the gospel; having received peace to his conscience without any exercise or labour of his, by perceiving the freeness of grace in its proper light. And this very sight of free grace truly convinces and humbles him. For the gospel convinces as well as comforts. *Act. 2. 36, 37.* Neither

ther is there any true conviction before faith : For the first true conviction by the spirit is of unbelief. *John xvi, 9*

As to DESIRES.

He before thought he had many good desires to know the truth ; that he was open to conviction, and had a sincere disposition to close with Christ and love him, &c. But now he knows that all these previous desires, were only aim'd at the doing or feeling something from whence he might derive peace, instead of receiving it purely from the freeness of divine grace. The same may be said of all *prayers, resolutions and endeavours*, previous to having peace with God thro' faith in the blood of Christ: For thus he was seeking righteousness, not by faith, but as it *were* by the works of the law. *Rom. ix, 32.*

As to the Spirit's Work and a Principle of Grace,

He used before to be praying for the spirit, and for a work of grace in the heart, that he might feel it in himself; and thro' that medium might have peace to his conscience, and sensible enjoyment of the divine favour. And when he thought he had found or obtain'd it, he took his pleasure in contemplating upon it, and exercised these affections towards it, which should be exercised directly upon Christ as revealed in the gospel.

But now, finding comfort and strength coming into his soul, by the view he has of a free and perfect favour ; he has no satisfaction concerning a work of grace in him ; but so far, as his affections are drawn off from every thing within him, and as he is made to depend upon and hold communion with Jesus Christ. And when the true knowledge of Christ thus pacifies, comforts and strengthens him, he ascribes this experience to the sovereign, efficacious work of the spirit, as knowing that the spirit works not by speaking of himself, but by taking of the things of Christ. *John xvi, 13, 14.*

As to the GOSPEL.

He had before a very low opinion of the mere word
of

of God; esteeming it a weak thing, a dead letter, and very insufficient to comfort and quicken him: imagining that there was a necessity for the spirit to perform some work upon him without the word, or speak something more to him than what the word declares. But now he sees such a fulness and freeness in the grace of Christ therein revealed, as is sufficient to answer all these spiritual purposes; because it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, *Rom. i. 16*. The making this alteration in our sentiments and views of the gospel, is a chief grand work of the spirit of God.

He used before to think, that however defective he was in other respects; yet he could not much charge himself with a continual propensity to suspect, mistake or despise the gospel itself: But now he has such an insight into the corruption of his heart, and the nature of the gospel, as makes him see that all his thoughts are naturally striving against it, one way or another; and convinces him of a continued necessity for that caution inculcated *Heb. iii. 12, 13*. Take heed, brethren, &c.

He before thought the gospel to be little more than a doctrinal account of what God has determined to do with regard to some unknown sinners; and so could not see how he could reap any advantage, or gain any solid comfort from it, without finding some previous good disposition in him, or exercising some activity towards it, in order to render it effectual. But now he sees that its gracious truths, and free promises, as they stand open in the word, point directly at him; and that 'tis *his* view of it by the spirit, which makes it useful and comfortable to his soul. According to *Act. xiii. 26*, To you is the word of this salvation sent; and *v. 38*. Thro' this man is preach'd unto you, the forgiveness of sins.

Again, he before judged the efficacy of the gospel to be only transient, by an occasional impression of some particular texts or truths of it: But now being taught the truth as in Jesus, he finds it to be the abiding root, principle or foundation of all he is as a christian; being born again of the incorruptible seed of the word, which liveth and abideth for ever, *1 Pet. i. 23*.

Once more; He formerly thought that when he was
call'd

call'd upon to make a profession of the reason of his hope; it was necessary for him to mention many other things, besides the truth as in Jesus: But now he sees such a *fulness* in the apostolic testimony, that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God; that he can profess this to be al sufficient to him, for the reason of his hope and confidence before God. According to *Peter's* confession *Mat. xvi. 16. see 1 John iv. 3. 15: v. 1. Rom. x. 9. Acts viii. 37.*

As to FAITH and TRUST.

Before, he used to conceive of *faith*, as some act to be exerted by him in order to his peace with God: And accordingly was much concern'd to perform the great work of believing in a right manner with *activity*, as previously necessary to his peace. But now, accounting faith to be nothing else but the *belief of the truth*, he worketh not, but believeth, *Rom. iv. 5*; and so has all his peace from the freeness and evidence of the divine testimony: and being relieved by this, he is induced to exercise acts of *love*, in coming, relying, embracing and the like; and as he goes on loving of, and living upon Christ revealed, and brings forth corresponding fruit, he obtains growing proof that he is of the truth. *John iii. 19*, or knows the grace of God in truth. *Col. i. 6.*

His principal concern, in order to obtain and preserve peace of conscience, was to know whether he had the *right sort* of faith, as distinguished from an historical or temporary faith; and so was led to look within himself for a reason of peace, from the *manner* of his believing: Whereas now nothing is the source, or immediate spring of his peace, but the truth of God which he believes, detached from every other consideration; and so beholding the perfect work of Christ, proclaim'd in the free gospel for his relief; being justified purely by faith, he has peace with God. *Rom. v. 1.*

Tho' formerly he was obliged to take into his consideration, something wrought in him or done by him, as a medium to encourage his confidence in Christ; yet he thought in his heart, and professed with his mouth
that

that he trusted in Christ alone. But now, he sees that all such trusting is deceitful ; since a Neonomian and even a Papist, may be said to trust in Christ in the same sense of the word ; but he can now in the truest and properest sense, say as in *Psalm* lxii, 5, 6. My soul wait thou *only* upon God, for my expectation is from him. He *only* is my rock and my salvation.

Whereas before, he took or sought his relief from apprehending himself to be a believer : He now takes it directly from the view of what he believes. The same may be said as to his being a penitent, a renew'd and sanctified person. For now that which moves him to repentance, that which renews and sanctifies his soul, namely, the free gospel by the spirit, is what satisfies his conscience before God ; and in this way he becomes more and more conscious that he believes, repents and is sanctified according to the gospel : and thus his conscience is by the blood of Christ purged from dead works to serve the living God. *Heb.* ix, 14.

As to EVIDENCES of Special Interest.

He used to think that good evidences, were the only proper and safe medium of a confidence and resting in Christ ; but now he sees that no evidence of his own interest is the cause or medium, but the genuine consequence of his reliance on Christ as a compleat saviour. For the belief of Christ's alssufficiency, is the support of his confidence, and the spring of his love and obedience ; to which his own conscience and the divine spirit give joint testimony, as the true marks of God's children.

Thus having heard the gospel of salvation, he trusts in Christ ; in whom after that he hath believed, he is sealed with the holy spirit of promise. *Eph.* i, 13

As to SANCTIFICATION

He used to look upon this work as somewhat distinct from the efficacy of the gospel by the spirit : But now he has no notion or thought of any other holiness or sanctification, but what springs from the knowledge of Christ ; being sensible, that the heart is purified by
faith.

Faith, *Act* xv, 9, and that we are sanctified thro' the truth. *John* xvii, 19, 19. And therefore as he has both his comfort and holiness from the same truth; he does not take his comfort from his holiness, but receives it directly from Christ, and enjoys it in the exercises of love and obedience; whereby it becomes more and more evident that both his comfort and holiness are genuine and evangelical.

Under renewed Sense of GUILT,

He used to preserve himself from the fear of divine wrath, and the curse of the law for his sins, by referring to his past experiences and evidences of interest; but now the only thought that relieves him is, the compleatness of Christ's atonement, and the absolute freeness of it, for him to take sanctuary in (and indeed this must be accounted sufficient, without taking in any other consideration; if it be not, the gospel is vain, and we are yet in our sins.) His fresh guilt either makes him call in question all his former experiences, or else they are remembered only as what may bring to his mind a fresh view of the divine free love, which was his relief at first, and was the spring and ground of all his former good experiences. Thus we are directed; if any man sin, remember, not what we have felt or done, but that we have an advocate with the father, &c. *1 John* ii, 1, 2.

As to SELF EXAMINATION.

He used to look upon the chief design of this duty to be to lead him to see whether he could not find some good thing wrought in him, or experienced by him, from whence he might gather evidence to relieve him from the fear of falling short of salvation. But now he looks upon it as chiefly designed for him to observe what is amiss in him; or to lead him to suspect whether his faith be not attended with some corrupt mixtures, when it does not appear to bring forth suitable fruits; according to the obvious design of that exhortation, seen in its connection. *2 Cor.* xiii, 5. Examine your selves, &c.

As

The Appendix.

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As to DUTY and HOLINESS.

He before thought in his heart, that God was a hard master; requiring things very difficult and almost impossible, in order to his consolation and salvation; accordingly he worked *hard* to obtain peace and safety. But now believing that all that is needful hereto is already purchased by Jesus Christ, and proclaimed freely in the gospel, he finds Christ's yoke to be easy, &c. and that upon this view of immediately free grace, true holiness and happiness keep peace together. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous. 1 John v. 3.

He before chiefly attended to his *inward experiences* or the workings of his own heart, as the proper evidence of his interest in Christ; and accordingly was led to take a *peculiar* delight in the *devotional* parts of the word! But now he is *equally* concern'd to be found in self denying obedience to Christ's commands, as absolutely necessary to prove his faith to be genuine, and the workings of his mind to be not delusive; and accordingly he has an *equal* relish for the *practical* parts of the word, being impressed with a sense of Christ's authority, enforced by a sight of his love. For hereby know we that we know him, if we keep his commandments, &c. 1 John ii. 3; 4; 5.

As to CHRISTIAN LOVE.

He before could content himself with a sort of general love to all that are accounted good people, refreshing himself with the thoughts of it as a very good mark of his real christianity: But now he cleaves with a peculiar affection to such as appear to be of one heart and soul in the single hope of the gospel; and accordingly desires to have the closest communion with them according to the antient self denying simplicity of the gospel, *AA.* ii. 41. 42. while at the same time his love to mankind is not lessened or contracted, but rendered

more

more sincere and diffusive, both upon the principles of humanity and christianity. See *Mat. v. 43—48.*

As to reading HUMAN WRITINGS.

He before took the greatest delight in reading serious devotional and experimental books; because they moved his affections, and led him to feel or find something in himself from whence he may take refreshment; esteeming this to be true pleasure and advantage: But now he is made more cordially to love the pure word of God, to read it more diligently, &c. and sees it necessary to read all other books with a jealous eye, lest they should draw off his attention from Christ to himself in some unsuspected way, and diminish his affection to the sincere milk of the word, by producing an inordinate delight in human compositions. *John v. 39.* Search the scriptures.

SUMMARY CONCLUSION.

In a word; the greatest part of his thoughts, concern, desires and endeavours were occupied about the workings of his own mind, or the evidences of his own interest, upon the goodness of his duties, or upon any thing that may in any way distinguish him from another: But now he is taught by the gospel to be chiefly looking to *Christ*; leaning upon *him*, loving, fearing and obeying *him*; and in thus living by faith on Christ, he becomes more and more conscious of his own special interest in *him*, by *feeling*, as I may say, a vital connection with *him*: and as he proceeds in this way, he has the testimony of his own conscience ratified by the seal of the spirit, that he has an interest in those promises which are made to them that know and love the Lord Jesus.

Thus as the apostle could conscientiously say, that he lived by the faith of the son of God; he could likewise add, who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*. *Gal. ii. 20*

Many more particulars might be added to the foregoing; but these are sufficient for a specimen to show how much this view of the gospel affects all christian
prac-

practice ; and to be a general guide to the thought, in drawing the contrast in farther particulars. They are all expressed in the most compendious and comprehensive language I could find out. For which reason, several of them may appear somewhat confused, or may require a close attention to take them clearly in. They all might have been more fully enlarged upon, as they require a more distinct explication : But for this, I must refer back to what preceeds in this pamphlet ; from whence the most of them are evidently extracted.

Thro' out the whole, I have had nothing in view, but to state what I conceive to be the truth as it is in Jesus, in its primitive simplicity and glory ; as it stands opposed to all *pharisaical* principles on the one hand, and to *antinomian* abuses on the other. Neither can we be too careful to guard against both these extremes, lest while we are aiming to avoid one of them, we should insensibly slide into the other. For we are naturally prone, both to self dependence and to self indulgence : Whereas the true gospel is an utter enemy to both ; while it lays a foundation for the most solid comfort, and exhibits the most powerful motives to true holiness and obedience.

I shall therefore conclude with a most noble sentiment of the apostle *Paul* ; wherein he at once guards in the most express manner against all carnal confidence and worldly-mindedness, which lie at the root of all evil ; by setting to our view a crucified Christ, as the sovereign antidote against every thing that is destructive to our consolation and sanctification : when he says, *Gal. vi. 14.* God forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ ; whereby the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.

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